महाभारत

The Mahābhārata of Vyasa

BOOK 3

THE COMPLETE VANA PARVA

TRANSCREATED FROM SANSKRIT

by P. Lal

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF VYĀSA

The Complete Vana Parva
Transcreated śloka-by-śloka from Sanskrit by P. Lāl

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Two birds sit
on the golden bough
of the pippala tree.
One eats
the sweet fruit.
The other watches.
Both are happy.
One is happier.
Which?

Śvetāśvatara
Upaniṣad IV : 6

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The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated by P. Lāl from the Sanskrit

BOOK THREE

The Complete Vana Parva

The Transcreator

P. Lāl is honorary Professor of English in St. Xavier's College, Calcutta. He was Special Professor of Indian Studies at Hofstra University, New York, 1962-63, and has lectured widely on Indian literature at English, American, and Australian universities. He was a delegate from India to the P. E. N. International Writers Conference in New York in June 1966, and Visiting Professor in the University of Illinois for the spring semester of 1968. Transcreated the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Mahānārānayaṇa Upaniṣads on a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship award in 1969-70. Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature, Hofstra University, spring 1971. Distinguished Visiting Professor and Consultant, Albion College, April-May 1972. Prentiss M. Brown Distinguished Visiting Professor, Albion College, January-May 1973. Robert Norton Visiting Professor, Ohio University, September 1973-June 1974. Visiting Professor of Indian Culture, Hartwick College, September-October 1975. Eli Lilly Visiting Professor, Berea College, February-May 1977. Honorary Doctorate of Letters, Western Maryland College, 1977. Currently at work on the complete English version of the Mahābhārata. Born 1928, married Shyamasree Devi 1955; has a son Ananda, and a daughter Srimati. Recipient of the Padma Shri award in 1970. Delegate to Asian Poets' Conference, Bangkok, 1988; Cambridge Literary Seminar, 1989; Harborfront Poetry Reading Series, Toronto, Canada, 1989. Appointed Suniti Kumar Chatterji Lecturer of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata in June 2005. Seventy five cassettes (each of 90 minutes' duration) of P. Lāl reading his transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata are available from WRITERS WORKSHOP. In October 1999 P. Lal began a śloka-by-śloka public reading of the transcreated epic to a miscellaneous group every Sunday morning for an hour at the Library of Dharma and Culture in Calcutta to illustrate the importance of Vyāsa's work as an inspiring *oral* experience and not just a print-culture masterpiece, the long-term reading project to proceed till the hundred thousand and plus ślokas are exhausted. 300 hour-long CDs of this recording, taped live are available from WW.

Preface

For Book 3, the Vana Parva, I repeat the guidelines:

1] This is the only absolutely "complete" English version of Vyāsa's epic. No śloka has been left out, for "scholarly" or puritanical or any other reasons. (The Gita Press, Gorakhpur, resolutely, in its Hindi version, translates मांस [māṁsa] as "flesh of fruit" because it wants the Pāṇḍava brothers hunting during their forest exile to be saved the embarrassment of eating flesh-food. So why not a vegetarian edition of Vyāsa?)

2] I present the text as it is: simple, direct, disturbing in its forthrightness. Since Krishna was nowhere near the Hastināpura sabhā at the time, how could he have re-robed Draupadī? Vyāsa says, "Krishna came, unseen, as Dharma, and re-robed her." Vyāsa's son by a servant-maid, Vidura [a.k.a. Dharma] is sitting in the sabhā, and presumably, as we say, does the needful. Or, perhaps, Draupadī's dharma as the chaste, inviolable wife who does not consent to her molestation is what re-robes her, as it does all who are forcibly abused. No need to add any of this to the translation: the percipient reader does not have to be a gurukula pandit or a university pedant to see what is happening.

3] This is a carefully revised, in places overhauled and re-written edition, comprising volumes 38-76 of the monthly fasciules of my Mahābhārata transcreation that have been appearing over the last 35 years, and are now in Fascicule 330 (in the Bhīṣma Parva) and are available separately from WRITERS WORKSHOP.

4] The English translation of the invocation on page 8 of Book 2 (The Sabhā Parva) follows the Poona Bhandarkar Critical Recension text, which omits mention of Vyāsa. All other recensions retain Vyāsa's name.

5] Mahā undertakings – such as the truly mad mission to transcreate the entire Mahābhārata singlehanded – create curious problems. Is Śiva's name Sthāṇu or Sthānu? (Sthāṇu of course is preferable, but there is nothing wrong with Sthānu – the root is the same). Should Bhārata be translated as "descendant of Bharata" or simply "Bhārata"? After all, the entire royal family traces its lineage to Śakuntalā's son Bharata. And which words should one capitalise, which not? There is a method in my madness. I judiciously – and arbitrarily – mix Webster's Third International guidelines with my own, whenever I have to deal with गन्धर्व, यक्ष,

पिशाच, नाग, राक्षस, उरग and so on. Puraṁdara, or Purandara? Saṁkarṣaṇa or Saṅkarṣaṇa? Āśrama or ashram? If the reader is patient, the system will slowly become clear. When should Dharma be capitalised, when not? When should it be Ātman, when ātman? Here Roman transliteration scores over the never-capitalised Devanāgari, by helping the transcreator to clarify subtle philosophical distinctions gracefully and easily. Or so I think. Ātman is Brahman, ātman is – well – jīva. Also, Pitāmaha – "Grandfather", "Grandsire", "respected elder", "Grand ancestor"? In a somewhat daring transcreation, I have portmanteau-ed "grand ancestor" into "grancestor", to apply only to the incomparable patriarch Bhīṣma, and none else.

6] We are now in the Vana Parva, Book Three, also known as the Āraṇya Parva: The Book of the Leaf-Filled and Fulfilling Forest. Thirteen years have to be spent in forest exile, and Yudhiṣṭhira is deeply depressed. His obsessive gambling fiasco has led to the "disgraceful" banishment of the five Pāṇḍava brothers and Draupadī. Keep in mind that once Vyāsa, "profoundly wise Vyāsa, anguished with grief for his son, made up his mind not to live, and was persuaded against it by the gods" [III : 83 : 96-97, p. 397]. Vyāsa knows what suicidal grief is like, because his own son Śuka (to whom he taught the Mahābhārata that was to be recited to the gods and gandharvas) did not live up to his father's expectations, and became a self-willed family-defying mokṣa-seeker.

Nor is this the only time in the mahā-kāvya that Yudhiṣṭhira is overcome with remorse-and-shame-stricken melancholia. On another occasion, after the Kurukṣetra carnage, Vidura argues him out of suicide by asking him to find what is common in नदी, पृथिवी, वनस्पति and स्त्री: river, earth, tree, woman. And Yudhiṣṭhira replies that they all transform grief into creative activity: sword-sliced river keeps flowing, polluted earth keeps providing sustenance, chopped tree branch sprouts fresh leaves, exploited woman brings up a family. No blame game. No self-reproach. Only private suffering creatively sublimated into public benefit.

Hence the Fulfilling Forest. When Yudhiṣṭhira asks, "Is there anyone in the world who has suffered like me?" Mārkaṇḍeya and Lomaśa, both super-wise ṛṣis, one an immortal *cirañjīvī*, give him the stories of grief-turned-into-joy. Three of them are at the very heart of the values of Indian civilisation: Sītā's suffering in the Rāmāyaṇa, Sāvitrī's challenge to and truimph over the god of death Yama, and the victory of Damayantī's love for her husband Nala. As Vidura said: स्त्री – It's the woman who teaches the supreme lesson on how to live one's life.

Kolkata
October 2005

Dedication

To

GK-जी

a good man सत्पुरुष gentilhomme

आत्मन्यपि न विश्वासस्तथा
भवति सत्सु यः ।
तस्मात् सत्सु विशेषेण
सर्वः प्रणयमिच्छति ॥

The trust we place in good men
is greater than the trust
we place in ourselves. That is why
we seek the company of good men.

[VANA PARVA : III 297 : 42
Sāvitrī-Satyavān Kathā]

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य
नरं चैव नरोत्तमम् ।
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं
ततो जयमुदीरयेत् ॥

Nārāyaṇaṁ namaskṛtya
Naraṁ caiva Narottamaṁ |
Devīṁ Sarasvatīm Vyāsaṁ
tato jayaṁ udīrayet ||

INVOCATION ~

We namaskāra Nārāyaṇa!
We namaskāra Nara!
We namaskāra finest-of-men Narottama!
We namaskāra Devī Sarasvatī!
We namaskāra Vyāsa!
May victory attend us. We exclaim Jaya!

SECTION ONE

1 “Best of Brahmins,” Janamejaya asked,
“after deceitfully defeating the Pāṇḍavas
in the dice-game,
and stirring

2 The Pāṇḍavas into fierce hostility
by their wicked behaviour,
what happened,
what did my Kaurava ancestors do?

3 How did Pṛthā-Kuntī’s sons,
shining like Śakra-Indra himself,
suddenly reduced to destitution,
spend their days in the forest?

4 Who faithfully followed the mahā-ātmaned ones,
in their deep distress?
How did they behave, what did they eat,
where did they live?

5 O mahā-muni, best of Brahmins,
how did the heroic
slayers-of-enemies
pass twelve years in the forest?

6 And how did their royal wife,
always devoted to them,
mahā-auspicious,
truth-speaking lady,

7 Who never deserved the misfortune
that overtook her –
how did she pass the period of fearful forest exile?
Tell me all, O you who are rich in tapasyā.

8 I can hardly control my curiosity,
O Brahmin.
I would like to know from you
every little detail.”

9 Defeated at dice and taunted
by Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s wicked-ātmaned sons
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
the Pāṇḍavas left Hastināpura.

10 Carrying their weapons,
they left by the gate facing Vardhamāna,
and then, with Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
moved in a northerly direction.

11 Indrasena and others,
with their wives and servants, fourteen in all,
followed the Pāṇḍavas
on swift chariots.

12 The citizens were distraught with grief;
they met
and fearlessly condemned Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, Vidura, and Kṛpa.

13 "When wicked Duryodhana," they said,
"with help from Śakuni, Karṇa, and Duḥśāsana
is greedy for this kingdom,
our families, homes are not safe –

14 Because this scoundrel is greedy
for the kingdom, our families,
dharma and artha are doomed.
No chance of happiness!

15 Duryodhana hates his superiors.
He has given up decent conduct;
he is mean, cruel,
proud and avaricious.

16 Where Duryodhana rules,
the land is doomed.
Let us all go
to where the Pāṇḍavas are going,

17 Because they are self-disciplined,
mahā-ātmaned, foe-subduing,
graced with humility,
famous, and dharma-abiding."

18 Saying this, they approached the Pāṇḍavas.
They stood,
hands folded in *añjali,*
before Kuntī's and Mādrī's sons.

19 "May you prosper!" they said.
"Where are you going,
leaving us mourning?
We will go where you go.

20 We have been distressed to learn
that you were defeated by adharma
by your enemies.
Don't leave us,

21 For we are loving and faithful to you,
we seek your welfare.
We do not want to live
under a dishonest rājā.

22 O bull-brave-men, listen to us
as we tell you of the good and ill
that come from associating
with good and bad men.

23 Cloth, water, sesame-seeds and earth
absorb perfume
when near flowers –
similarly virtues develop by association.

24 Mixing with a fool will only
bewilder the mind;
mixing with a good man
will develop dharma, day by day.

25 If you seek virtue,
seek out wise, elderly,
clean-behaving,
ascetic-minded men.

26 Better than study of the śāstras
is the company
of the three-fold rich –
rich in knowledge, birth, and deed.

27 Action is not necessary –
association with the good suffices.
Only wickedness results
from mixing with the wicked.

28 The very sight and touch
of a wicked person
diminishes dharma.
Such a man never finds fulfilment.

29 Mix with the mean, become mean;
with the low, become low;
with indifferent, indifferent;
with good, good.

30 What the world knows as
dharma-kāma-artha
is in different proportions
present in each of us –

31 The Vedas praise it,
good men recommend it.
If we seek our own good,
we should mix with men who are good."

32 "We are fortunate indeed,"
replied Yudhiṣṭhira,
"to have our subjects, led by Brahmins,
so kindly credit us with qualities
that we did not think
we possessed.

33 I and my brothers
have only one request –
if you really respect us,
do not say no to this.

34 Our grandfather Pitāmaha-Bhīṣma,
Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Vidura,
our mother and our friends
are still in Hastināpura.

35 They are still suffering from shock.
If you wish
to make me happy,
go back and take care of them.

36 Your sympathy for us has brought you
far out of the city.
Go back. Pledge your affection
to our grieving relatives.

37 This is all that I have to ask of you.
If you agree,
you will make us happier
than can be said."

38 The citizens listened
to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
and a united wail arose from them –
"Hai! Our rājā!"

39 Still saddened by their feelings
for the Pāṇḍavas, unable to join them,
they took leave,
recalling the Pāṇḍavas' noble qualities.

40 When they had gone,
the Pāṇḍavas climbed their chariots
and drove to the mahā-banyan called Pramāṇa
on Jāhnavī-Gaṅgā's banks.

41 The sun was setting;
the Pāṇḍava heroes touched the water
and felt purified.
They spent the night there.

42 That night, in their sorrow,
they subsisted only on water.
Some fire-worshipping Brahmins,
some non-fire-worshipping ones,

43 Followed them because they had affection
for the Pāṇḍavas.
In their wise company,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira shone.

44 That desolate night was made pleasant
by the Brāhmins lighting fires,
chanting the Vedas,
and conversing.

45 Those excellent Brahmins
with *haṁsa*-like melodious voices
sweetened the night
for the excellent Kaurava rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

SECTION TWO

1 That night passed; in the morning,
those Brahmins who lived on alms
stood in front of the heroic Pāṇḍavas
entering the forest.

2 Kuntī's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
said to them:
"We have lost our kingdom, our wealth,
everything.

3 Now we go into forest-exile,
subsisting on fruits, roots and meat.
Snakes and fierce animals
abound in it.

4 You will have to suffer so much there –
the sufferings of Brahmins
can shake even the gods –
and I am only a mortal!
My advice is: Brahmins, go back!
Don't follow us."

5 The Brahmins replied: "Rājā,
we will go where you go.
We are devoted to you,
we know what true dharma is.

6 The gods have compassion
on their bhaktas,
specially on Brahmins
who follow the path of noble conduct."

7 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "Twice-born ones,
I have always had the highest bhakti
for Brahmins.
But our utter poverty bewilders me.

8 It bewilders my brothers too
who have to go
and gather fruits, roots and vension
from the forest.

9 Draupadī's distress
and the loss of our kingdom
have been too great a burden for them.
Spare them from more."

10 "Lord of the earth," replied the Brahmins,
"do not be anxious.
We will look after ourselves,
but we will go with you.

11 We will chant japa for you
and meditate,
and please you with pleasing talk,
and be pleased ourselves."

12 "Then let it be as you say,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Your company will make me happy,
though my lot is despicable.

13 How will I endure the sight
of your fending for yourselves?
Surely you don't deserve this!
Shame on Dhṛtarāṣṭra's wicked sons!"

14 He sat down and was silent.
A learned Brahmin named Śaunaka,
who knew the truths
of Sāṁkhya and Yoga
and the subtleties of Adhyātmā,
said to the king:

15 "Every day
thousands of griefs
and thousands of fears
pursue the ignorant.
The learned are not affected.

16 Learned men like you
are not trapped into fault-filled,
desire-loaded karma
opposed to knowledge
and blocking liberation.

17 You have, O rājā,
the eight qualities
said by the śrutis and smṛtis
to ward off evils.

18 Poverty doesn't depress you,
dangers don't dishearten,
neither do body-suffering,
mind-pain, and adversity of friends.

19 I will chant to you the ślokas
mahātmā Janaka chanted in the past
on how to attain
serenity of the ātman.

20 The world is full of sorrows –
body-sorrows, mind-sorrows.
I will tell you how to remove them.
Listen.

21 Body-suffering has a four-fold cause:
disease,
contact with pain-giving objects,
toil, lack of material comforts.

22 Timely medicine will give relief
to the diseased body –
and not constantly thinking of pain
will relieve mental affliction.
These are the two yogas recommended.

23 Which is why experienced doctors
first soothe the patient's mind
with pleasing words
and pleasant objects.

24 A heated iron ball
heats the water in a pot;
an excited, nervous mind
produces pains in the body.

25 Water puts out fire,
knowledge pacifies the mind.
With the mind at peace,
the body also relaxes.

26 The root of mind-suffering
is desire.
Desire makes men miserable
with many sorrows.

27 Desire is the root
of misery and of fear.
Desire produces pleasure
as well as grief of all kinds.

28 Desire breeds attachment,
attachment clings to the world.
Both are bad –
but desire is the worst of all.

29 Fire in a tree's hollow
consumes the tree and its roots.
Selfish desire
devours dharma and artha.

30 To withdraw is not to renounce.
To be in, yet out –
that is renunciation.
Such a man sheds desire,
such a man is free.

31 Desire neither friends nor wealth:
be detached.
Use knowledge to destroy
attachment to your body.

32 Water slips off a lotus leaf.
Desire cannot affect those
who know what is eternal,
who study the śāstras,
who are cleansed by knowledge.

33 Desire produces the agony of attachment;
from such kāma
grows endless hankering
for worldly things.

34 This ever-thirsting hankering is wickedness,
the source of suffering.
This wicked hankering
leads to adharma.

35 The body decays,
but hankering stays, a killing disease.
The one who is wicked cannot shed it.
The one who can, is free.

36 Hankering stays in the body,
festering there.
Like fire, its origin is unknown:
it never seems to end.

37 Wood feeds fire,
and fire consumes wood;
so desire devours the impure man
who nourishes it.

38 All creatures with life fear death;
men with wealth
fear king, flood, fire,
thieves and relatives.

39 A piece of meat in the air is eaten by birds;
on the ground, by animals;
in water, by fish.
The rich are everyone's meat.

40 Many find wealth a burden.
The man who thinks
wealth brings happiness,
has no idea of happiness.

41 The more the wealth,
the greater the greed and folly.
Wealth breeds
stinginess, pride, and fear.

42 Wise men see many dangers in wealth.
Earning wealth is difficult,
keeping it is misery,
spending it

43 A problem,
giving it up painful.
Friends who become wealthy become enemies
because they are wealthy.
Wealth leads to murders.

44 Since to have wealth
is to be variously miserable,
why regret its loss?
The foolish regret loss of wealth,
the wise do not.

45 The thirst for wealth
cannot be quenched.
The greatest happiness
is to be contented.
The learned seek only that.

46 Learned men,
knowing youth, beauty, life, wealth, success,
to be ephemeral,
do not covet them.

47 Avoid running after wealth,
and escape anxieties.
Men of dharma praise those
who spurn riches.

48 As for wealth desired
for purposes of dharma –
best not sought at all.
Easier not to touch mud
than wash it off later.

49 Yudhiṣṭhira,
cultivate non-attachment to things.
If you seek dharma,
give up wealth-hunger."

50 "Brahmin," replied Yudhiṣṭhira;
"I don't want wealth for myself;
I want it
to give to needy Brahmins.

51 What is the point
of living in the world, Brahmin,
if you can't help those
who depend on you?

52 Animals share food among themselves.
Shouldn't a householder
share food with brahmacārīs
who don't cook for themselves?

[III:2:53-59]

Transcreated by P. Lal

53 A good man's house
should never lack a grass mat,
a place to sit, water,
and sweet welcoming words.

54 For the tired, a mat,
for the visitor, a seat,
for the thirsty, water,
for the hungry, food.

55 A smiling face, an open heart,
and sweet words
are a guest's privilege.
Receive him standing,
offer him a seat, respect him appropriately:
this is sanātana dharma.

56 Those who neglect the sacred *agnihotṛ* fire
and sacred bulls,
who disrespect kinsmen, guests,
friends, wives, children, and servants –
will perish by fire
for such misbehaviour.

57 No one should cook
only for himself,
no one should kill an animal pointlessly.
No one should eat food
that has not been first offered
to the gods.

58 Each morning and evening,
he should scatter food
for dogs, and crows –
this is called the Vaiśvadeva sacrifice.

59 The man who eats the remainder
of a food-offering
to gods, *pitṛs*, guests, and gurus,
eats *amṛta*-nectar.
The remainder of a yajña-offering
is also *amṛta*.

60 In that yajña, a smiling face,
hospitality, sweet words,
respect, food-and-drink offered,
are the five *dakṣiṇās.*

61 The man who spontaneously
feeds a tired wayfarer
who is a complete stranger to him,
earns the highest merit.

62 The householder who behaves
in the way I have described
is a man of high dharma.
Brahmin, what do you think?"

63 Śaunaka replied: "Aho!
How sad that this world
should be riddled with contradictions!
What shames the good,
delights the wicked.

64 Enslaved by ignorance
and sense-enslaving impulse,
foolish men became gluttons
and sexual debauches.

65 Like untameable horses
dragging a chariot,
the seductive senses
bewilder human beings.

66 When even one of the six senses
finds an object of delight,
desire grows to feed
on the object.

67 The mind looks forward
to the feeding;
and hopes are cherished;
and hopes solidify into decisions.

68 The moth loves flame
and is burnt in it.
Man pursues his kāma
hardened into decision
and burns in temptation.

69 Sense-pleasures blind him.
Mahā-folly and ignorance
are mistaken for happiness.
Self-knowledge disappears.

70 Ignorance, karma and desire
propel humans
into the wheel
of ceaseless birth and rebirth,

71 Moving from one womb into another,
from Brahmā down to grassblade,
born in water, earth, and sky.
Again and again. Again and again

72 This is what happens
to ignorant humans.
Now let me explain
what happens to the enlightened
who cherish dharma and mokṣa.

73 The message of the Vedas is this :
Do karma, renounce its fruit.
Perform dharma, but take no pride
in the dharma performed.

74 Yajña, study, charity,
tapasyā, truth, fortitude-forgiveness,
sense-control, greed-forsaking –
are Dharma's eight paths.

75 The first four
take one to the *pitṛ*-regions.
Perform them without pride
in the performance.

76 The next four are chosen
by those who seek
the regions of the gods.
Pure-ātmaned men follow these eight.

77 Those who wish
to control the world,
should first control themselves,
observing vows, serving gurus,

78 Eating minimally,
studying the Vedas,
disciplining their deeds,
and subduing their passions.
By controlling desire, and hate,
the gods prospered.

79 Because they are rich in yoga,
the Rudras, Sādhyas, Ādityas and Aśvins
are the world's guardians.

80 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira, be like them.
Do not load your deeds with desire,
struggle hard
in yoga and tapasyā.

81 You have cleared your *pitṛ*-debts
to your male and female ancestors,
you have acquired the fruits of action.
Practise tapasyā
to support the twice-born Brahmins.

82 Success in tapasyā
grants all wishes.
Practise tapasyā,
and find your ātman's fulfilment."

SECTION THREE

1 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira listened to Śaunaka
and going to his *purohita*,
in the presence of his brothers,
he said:

2 "All these Veda-learned Brahmins
follow me wherever I go.
I have no means
of supporting them.

3 I cannot refuse them,
but I have no alms
to give them.
Tell me what to do."

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4 Dharma-rich Dhaumya reflected for a while
to find an answer
consistent with dharma (continued Vaiśampāyana);
then he said:

5 "When Creation began,
the world's creatures starved for food.
Savitā the Sun
took fatherly pity on them.

6 He went north and sucked up
the waters with his rays;
then, returning south, he hovered
with concentrated heat over the earth.

7 And while he hovered,
the lord of the vegetal world, the Moon,
converted the vaporous heat of the Sun
into clouds.

8 The Sun, stimulated with lunar light,
turns seeds
into six-flavoured vegetables,
which form the food of creatures.

9 The food that we eat
is the gift of the Sun.
The Sun is the father of life.
Take refuge in him.

10 All the great kings
of famous dynasties and accomplishments
have sought the welfare of their people
through tapasyā.

11 Bhīma, Kārtavīrya-Arjuna,
Vaiṇya and Nahuṣa
saved their subjects by tapasyā,
yoga, and samādhi.

12 Therefore, dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
be like them –
support the Brahmins by dedicating yourself
to dharma-guided tapasyā."

13 "How did the great Kaurava
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira worship the splendid Sun
for the Brahmins' sake?"
asked Janamejaya.

14 First, O Indra-among-rājās
(replied Vaiśampāyana),
purify your thoughts
and pull in your senses;
then you may set a time
and listen while I go into detail.

15 O mahā-minded monarch,
listen to the one hundred and eight names
of the Sun that Dhaumya supplied
to mahā-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira:

16 Sūrya, Aryamā, Bhaga, Tvaṣṭā, Pūṣā, Arka, Savitā,
Ravi,
Gabhastimān, Aja, Kāla, Mṛtyu, Dhātā,
Prabhā-kara;

17 Pṛthivī, Āpa, Teja, Kha, Vāyu, Parāyaṇa,
Soma, Bṛhaspati, Śukra, Budha, Aṅgāraka;

18 Indra, Vivasat, Diptāṁśu, Śuci, Śauri, Śanaiścara,
Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Skanda, Varuṇa, Yama,

19 Vaidyuta, Jāṭhāragni, Aindha, Tejaḥ pati,
Dharmadhvaja, Vedakartā, Vedāṅga, Vedavāhana;

20 Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara, all-enveloping Kali,
Kālī-Kāṣṭhā-Muhurta, Kṣapā, Yāma, Kṣaṇa;

21 Saṁvatsarkara, Aśvattha, Kālacakra-Vibhāvasu,
Śāsvata-Puruṣa, Yogī, Vyaktāvyakta, Sanātana;

22 Kālādhyakṣa, Prajādhyakṣa, Viśvakarmā,
Tamonuda,
Varuṇa, Sāgara, Aṁśu, Jīmūta, Jīvana, Arihā;

23 Bhūtāśraya, Bhūtapati, Sarvalokanamaskṛta,
Sraṣṭā, Samvartaka, Vahni, Sarvādi, Alolupa;

24 Ananta, Kapila, Bhānu, Kāmada, Sarvatomukha,
Jaya, Vaśāla, Varada, Sarvadhātuniṣecitā;

[III:3:25-32]

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25 Manaḥsuparṇa, Bhūtadi, Śīghraga, Prānadhāraka,
Dhanvatari, Dhūmaketu, Ādideva, Aditisuta;

26 Dvadaśātmā, Aravindākṣa, Pitā-mātā-pitāmaha,
Svargadvāra-prajādvāra, Mokṣadvāra-triviṣṭapa;

27 Dehakartā, Praśāntātmā, Viśvātmā, Viśvatomukha,
Carācarātmā, Sūkṣmātamā, Maitreya, Karuṇāvit.

28 These are the hundred
and eight names
of immeasurably
radiant Sūrya,
as given by Brahmā
the Self-Born.

29 'Blazing like gold
blazing like fire
worshipped by gods
pitṛs and yakṣas
adored by anti-gods
Siddhas and Niśācaras
Radiant Bhāskara
god of the Sun
I bow to you!'

30 The man who recites
this song of praise
at sunrise,
gets wife, children, riches,
recalls his past life,
becomes serene.

31 Focusing his mind,
he recites this song
in praise of the Sun –
Grief, fire, and flood
will not touch him;
he gets all he desires."

32 Yudhiṣṭhira listened to the beneficial words
of Dhaumya
and, eager to support
the Brahmins

33 Of pure mind and strict vows,
    Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
began to practise tapasyā.
    He worshipped the Sun with flowers,

34 And turning his face in the direction
    of Divākara, the day-making sun, he bathed.
Yoga-firm, sense-subdued,
    Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira subsisted on air.

35 He purified himself with water
    from the Gaṅgā,
restrained his speech, and practised *prāṇāyāma.*
    He chanted this *stotra*:

36 "Sun!
Eye of the universe!
Ātman of all bodies!
Womb of life!
Goodness of the good!

37 Refuge of the followers of Sāṁkhya!
Inspiration of yogīs!
You are the open door!
You are goal of mokṣa-seekers!

38 Because you are,
    the world is;
Because you are,
    the world glows;
You purify the world,
    you nourish it selflessly.

39 Brahmins who know the Vedas
    adore you,
Brahmins sing mantras from the Vedas
    in praise of you.
Ṛṣis worship you.

40 As you move
    in your celestial chariot,
Siddhas, Cāraṇas, Gandharvas, Yakṣas,
    Guhyakas,
and Nāgas follow you,
    seeking your blessings.

41 Thirty-three gods, the Vaimānikas,
Upendra-Viṣṇu and Mahendra-Indra,
have all achieved their desires
by propitiating you.

42 The Vidyādharas
have offered you garlands
of *mandāra*-flowers
and obtained their desires.

43 The Guhyas and seven orders of *pitṛs*,
divine and human,
have attained excellence above others
by offering you pūjā.

44 The Vasus, Maruts, Rudras,
Maricipas,
the Vālakhilyas and the Siddhas shine
by adoring you.

45 Nothing I know
in all the seven worlds,
and the world of Brahmā,
is beyond your power.

46 Others are more powerful,
others are more famous –
but none shines like you,
none inspires like you.

47 You are the Radiance of all!
You are the Lord of all Radiance!
You are Satya-Truth
You are Sattvaṁ-Eristence!
You are Sāttvika-Goodness!

48 Viśvakarma took your radiance
and hammered out
the *cakra* of Viṣṇu,
wielder of the Śārṅga-bow.
With its refulgence, Viṣṇu routs the pride
of the enemies of the gods.

49 You suck up the moisture
from summer pools and plants.
You drench the earth
in the monsoon.

50 Your rays burn, they sear;
they become clouds,
they roar, they dazzle with lightning;
they send rain.

51 Nothing comforts in winter
like your warm rays –
neither fire, nor snug shelter,
nor woollen blanket.

52 The earth and her thirteen islands
shine with your shining;
ceaselessly you work for the good
of the three worlds.

53 Without you, the worlds are blind;
without you,
the wise cannot pursue
dharma, artha and kāma.

54 With your grace Brahmins, Kṣatriyas
and Vaiśyas perform
the various rituals of Ādhana,
Paśubandha, Iṣṭi,
Mantra, Yajña and Tapaḥkriya
(sang Yudhiṣṭhira).

55 Those who know about Cosmic Kāla
describe you
as the beginning and end
of the thousand-yuga Brahmā-day.

56 You are the lord of the Manus,
of the sons of the Manus,
of the universe, of all mankind,
of Manvantaras, the Īśvara of īśvaras.

57 On doom-day, only the *saṁvartaka*-fire
of your wrath exists,
and the three worlds
are burnt to ashes.

58 Multi-coloured mahā-clouds,
born of yours rays,
arrive with Airāvata and thunder,
and flood the worlds on that doom-day.

59 And you break yourself
into twelve separate suns,
each sucking up
the waters of the ocean.

60 You are known as Indra,
as Rudra, as Viṣṇu, as Prajāpati;
you are Agni, Essence of Manaḥ,
Prabhu-Lord, the Eternal Brahmā.

61 You are Haṁsa, Savitā, Bhānu, Aṁśumāli,
Vṛṣakapi;
Vivasvat, Mihira, Pūṣaṇ, Mitra, and Dharma;

62 You are the thousand-rayed Āditya, Tapana,
Gavāmpati,
Mārtaṇḍa, Arka, Ravi, Sūrya, Śaraṇya, Dinakṛt;

63 Divākara, Saptasapti, Dhāmakeśī, Virocana,
Āśugāmī, Tamoghna, and Haritāśva.

64 The man who offers you pūjā
on the sixth or seventh lunar day,
with bhakti,
gets the favour of Lakṣmī.

65 Those who offer you reverence
and adoration
with singleminded devotion
are freed from fears and miseries.

66 Those who have faith in you
as the Essence of all
are freed from disease and defect,
and find full happiness.

67 Lord of food!
Grant me food
To entertain
All my guests.
Full of śraddhā, I ask you this.

68 I offer homage to all the hosts –
the Māṭharas,
Aruṇas, Daṇḍas and others –
who offer you homage.

69 Shaking with awe, I offer homage
to all the World-Mothers
– I bow to them –
may I receive their grace."

70 Mahārāja Janamejaya (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Bhāskara the Sun was pleased with the *stuti*
of Yudhiṣṭhira. The self-shining Day-Maker
gave him darshan and said:

71 "All that you desire
I will provide.
I will provide food
for your twelve years of exile.

72 I give you this copper pot.
Take it, strict-vowed Yudhiṣṭhira.
So long as Pāñcālī-Draupadī
does not first eat from it –

73 It will provide an inexhaustible supply
of meat, fruits, roots, and vegetables,
cooked in your kitchen."
With these words,

74 The Sun-God disappeared.
The boon-wisher who recites
with ascetic intensity
this song of praise
will get what he wants,
however hard to attain.

75 Repeated daily recitation or listening
of this song of praise
will get one a son; or wealth;
or learning.

76 A man or woman who recites this
at saṁdhyā-dawn and saṁdhyā-dusk
will fear no dangers and find liberation.
This song was given
in the distant past by Brahmā
to mahātmā Śakra-Indra;

77 From Śakra-Indra it went to Nārada,
from Nārada to Dhaumya;
and Dhaumya gave it to Yudhiṣṭhira,
fulfilling all his wishes.

78 Who chants this praise wins wars,
it will bring wealth;
it will cleanse a man of all misdeeds,
and take him to the realm of the Sun.

79 Kuntī's son, dharma-following Yudhiṣṭhira,
received the boon,
emerged from the water,
touched Dhaumya's feet;
after which he embraced his brothers
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

80 He went to the kitchen with Draupadī,
and while she watched
he started cooking food
in the pot.

81 The food, no matter how little,
separated and became
four kinds of inexhaustible dishes.
He fed the Brahmins.

82 After the Brahmins had eaten,
he fed his younger brothers;
then Yudhiṣṭhira ate
the sanctified leftovers.

83 When Yudhiṣṭhira had finished,
Pārśatī-Draupadī took the rest.
After she had eaten her fill,
the pot emptied.

84 Yudhiṣṭhira, radiant like the Sun,
obtained the self-replenishing pot
from the Sun,
and entertained the Brahmins lavishly.

85 On his purohita's instructions,
he performed yajñas
with the proper mantras,
as laid down in the śāstras,
on the right lunar days,
and auspicious star-conjunctions.

86 The Pāṇḍavas,
blessed as a result of their rituals,
went to the forest of Kāmyaka,
accompanied by Dhaumya and the Brahmins.

SECTION FOUR

1 When the Pāṇḍavas left,
Ambikā's son, wisdom-
inseeing Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
was conscience-stricken.
Reclining luxuriously,
he said to dharmātmā Vidura:

2 "You have the wisdom
of the Bhārgava sage Śukra,
you know the subtleties
of dharma. You see
the Kauravas dispassionately.
What is good for us?

3 Tell me, Vidura,
what should we do now?
How make our subjects
love us? How escape
the coming doom? Tell me,
for you know many ways."

[III:4:4-9]

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4 “Lord of men! The root
of the threefold way,
is Dharma.
A kingdom’s foundation, O rājā,
is Dharma. Use Dharma
with your sons and Pāṇḍu’s sons.

5 When Subala’s son Śakuni
and other wicked men
tricked Yudhiṣṭhira,
Kuntī’s son, a man of truth,
and cheated him at dice,
then Dharma was violated.

6 There is one way
to atone for this act
of wickedness.
If Duryodhana agrees,
he may still be ranked
among the good.

7 Return to the Pāṇḍavas
what you once gave
to them. No dharma
for a king is greater
than that he should
not covet others’ wealth.

8 Your fame will shine,
family quarrels cease,
no adharma touch you,
if you do this. Do this –
please the Pāṇḍavas,
disown Śakuni.

9 If you wish to see
the fame of your sons
restored, O rājā,
do exactly as I say.
If you fail to do this,
the Kauravas are doomed.

10 If Bhīma and Arjuna
are roused to anger,
no foes will escape –
Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
will use his Gaṇḍīva,
unparalleled war-weapon,

11 And Bhīma is known
as the world's greatest warrior!
Is there anything
in this world of men
that is beyond the skill
of these two heroes?

12 I warned you the day
your son was born –
'Cast him away
for the good of your race –
he is ill-omened.'
You refused at that time
to listen to me. O rājā,
had you done as I warned,
this would not have happened.

13 If your sons agree
to rule peacefully
and jointly the kingdom
with the sons of Pāṇḍu,
you will be happy,
you mind will have peace.

14 Disown Duryodhana,
make Pāṇḍu's son
Yudhiṣṭhira the ruler.
He is untouched by ego,
he will rule according
to the rules of dharma.

15 The kings of the world, O rājā,
will come like Vaiśyas
and pay us homage.
Arrange so that Karṇa,
Duryodhana, and Śakuni
gladly accept Yudhiṣṭhira.

16 Compel Duḥśāsana
to beg forgiveness
of Bhīma and Draupadī
in open sabhā.
Reconcile Yudhiṣṭhira,
and instal him king.
What else can I say?
If you do this,
you will prosper."

17 "No, Vidura," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"for your words
are for the good of the Pāṇḍavas,
not ours. I cannot agree
to what you have said
in this sabhā.

18 How can you make yourself
say what you say?
Only the Pāṇḍavas!
Why are you hostile to me?
Should I forsake my sons
for Pāṇḍu's sons?

19 Of course the Pāṇḍavas
are my sons too –
but Duryodhana
is my flesh-and-blood!
You can speak
as dispassionately as you like,
but how will you ever
convince me to forsake
my own body for others?

20 I respect you, Vidura,
very deeply, I do –
but your advice is one-sided.
Stay here if you like,
leave us if you like.
No matter how hard
you try to please
an unfaithful wife,
she will leave her husband."

21 Dhṛtarāṣṭra rose abruptly
and strode away
to the inner rooms.
Vidura, muttering
"Doomed, doomed",
went to the Pāṇḍavas.

SECTION FIVE

1 The bull-brave sons of Pāṇḍu
went from the banks
of the Jāhnavī-Gaṅgā
to Kurukṣetra.

2 They bathed in the Sarasvatī,
Dṛṣadvatī and Yamunā rivers,
and travelled westwards
from one forest to another,

3 Until they arrived
at the Kāmyaka forest
on the banks of the Sarasvatī –
an enchanting uncultivated tract.

4 The munis of the area
fed and entertained them;
they chose to live there
in the bird-and-beast-haunted forest.

5 Vidura, eager for a darshan
of the Pāṇḍavas,
drove his chariot
to the luxuriant Kāmyaka forest.

6 In his swift-horsed chariot,
from a distance he saw Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
sitting with Draupadī,
with his brothers and Brahmins.

7 Noticing Vidura coming,
firm-in-truth
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
turned to Bhīma, saying,
"What message can Vidura
be bringing for us?

8 Has Subala's son Śakuni
sent him to invite us
to another dice-game?
Does wicked Śakuni
now want to win
even our weapons from us?

9 I tell you, Bhīma,
if invited, I will not,
I cannot refuse.
But if the Gāṇḍīva-bow
is staked and lost, we will never be able
to recover our kingdom."

10 The Pāṇḍavas rose,
respectfully welcoming Vidura.
Vidura, descendant
of Ajamīḍha, sat down
and made the customary
formal greetings.

11 After he had rested,
the Pāṇḍavas asked him
the reason for his visit;
he explained in detail
his conversation
with Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

12 "Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira," said Vidura,
"I am dependant on him;
he summoned me,
I went; he was respectful. He said:
'Tell me what is good
for us and Pāṇḍu's sons.'

13 I told him what I thought
would be best
for the Kauravas and Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
That did not please him.
I could not think
of any alternative advice.

14 My advice was well-meant,
O sons of Pāṇḍu,
but he refused it.
A sick man does not
relish medicine.
He was not pleased at all.

15 The unfaithful wife
of a scholarly man
rarely returns to the path of virtue.
A young girl thinks
a sixty-year old husband
abhorrent. Indeed,
the bull-brave Bharata
Dhṛtarāṣṭra found
my advice unpleasant.

16 The Kauravas are doomed –
no doubt of that!
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's future
is absolutely dark.
My advice slipped off
like water on a lotus leaf.

17 He was furious,
he shouted at me:
'Go where your śraddhā
takes you, Bharata-descendant.
I do not need you
to advise me any more.'

18 Dismissed by rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
I have come to you.
I bring you advice.
I will repeat here
what I said in the sabhā.
Listen to me carefully.

19 Like a man slowly fanning
sparks into a fire,
a wise man bears
enemies' wrongs patiently,
and develops his resources
till he becomes victorious.

20 The man who shares wealth
with his followers
wins friends in a crisis.
With such excellent allies,
one day he will enjoy
lordship of the world.

21 Son of Pāṇḍu,
share what you have
with your followers;
speak the truth, be pleasant.
No self-pūjā, no boasting.
You will prosper."

22 "I am fortunate to have
such sane advice,"
replied Yudhiṣṭhira,
"on what should be done,
where and when.
I will follow it."

SECTION SIX

1 O Bharata Janameyaja (Vaiśampāyana said),
after Vidura went to the Pāṇḍavas,
mahā-wise-Dhṛtarāṣṭra repented
his action.

2 He recalled Vidura's supreme insight
into war and peace,
and he realised that the Pāṇḍavas
would in time prosper.

3 All this pained him deeply. Remembering Vidura,
he came to the door of the sabhā
and, in front of all the earth-lords,
collapsed and fainted.

4 He quickly recovered, stood up,
and turned to Sañjaya,
who was standing
beside him.

5 "My brother and my friend
is like Dharma personified.
Whenever I think of him,
I am depressed and ashamed.

6 Go, bring back to me my brother,
who is learned
in all the truths of dharma."
He said this and wept.

7 Regret smote him,
remorse overwhelmed him.
Speaking out of brotherly love,
the rājā said to Sañjaya:

8 "Sañjaya, go, find out
if my brother Vidura
whom I wickedly expelled in anger,
is alive or no.

9 He was wise, profoundly so.
He never did me any wrong,
not the slightest.
And I went

10 And did this terrible wrong to my own brother.
Go, supremely intelligent Sañjaya,
bring him back,
or I will die."

11 Sañjaya respectfully listened
and agreed.
"It will be done,"
and prepared to go to Kāmakya forest.

12 He rushed there as soon as he could.
Form a distance
he saw Yudhiṣṭhira,
wearing *ruru*-deerskin, surrounded

13 By his brothers,
sitting with Vidura and thousands of Brahmins,
like Puraṁdara-Indra seated
among the gods.

14 Sañjaya approached,
and offered his pūjā-respects to Yudhiṣṭhira.
Bhīma, Arjuna and the twins
welcomed him.

15 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira enquired
about the health of everyone.
After Sañjaya had rested,
he explained his visit:

16 "Kṣattā-Vidura! Ambikā's son,
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra, remembers you.
Return soon to the palace.
and restore his life to him.

17 Shining one, take the permission
of the Pāṇḍavas
and go back to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
who is a lion among rājās."

18 Wise Vidura, always considerate
to the feelings of his relatives,
immediately returned to Hastināpura
with Yudhiṣṭhira's permission.

19 Mahā-powerful Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"Vidura, you are steeped in dharma!
Defectless one! Fortunate am I to have you back,
fortunate that you still remember me.

20 O bull-brave Bharata,
day and night I could not sleep,
I was like one
who forgets his own body."

21 He embraced Vidura
and smelt his head affectionately.
He said, "Defectless one,
forgive me for saying all I said."

22 "O rājā," said Vidura,
"I forgave you long ago.
You are my supreme guru.
I hurried back for your darshan.

23 All men of dharma
feel for those who suffer.
O tiger-among-men! How could you
have even thought otherwise?

24 O Bharata descendant, your sons
are as dear to me as Pāṇḍu's sons.
Because Pāṇḍu's sons suffer,
I feel more for them."

25 The two mahā-radiant brothers,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Vidura
spoke gently to each other.
Such supreme happiness!

SECTION SEVEN

1 When he heard that Vidura
had returned and been reinstated,
the ill-minded son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
could not control himself.

2 His good sense dimmed by folly,
Duryodhana summoned Subala's son Śakuni,
Karṇa, and Duḥśāsana,
and said to them:

3 "Dhṛtarāṣṭra's intelligent counsellor
is back.
Vidura is a clever man,
a friend of the Pāṇḍavas.

4 He will do his best
to persuade Dhṛtarāṣṭra
to bring back the Pāṇḍavas.
So let us make plans.

5 If I ever see the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī
return to this city,
I'll starve myself
to death.

6 I'll take poison or hang myself,
I'll burn on a pyre
or use my dagger on myself –
I can't stand their prosperity."

7 "Rājā, world-ruler," said Śakuni,
"have you lost your head?
They have agreed to the exile –
what are you afraid of?

8 O bull-brave Bharata, you know
the Pāṇḍavas strictly follow the truth.
Respected one! *Tāta!* They will never agree
to your father's suggestion.

9 Assuming that they do,
and, breaking their pledge,
return to our city – in that case,
this is what we'll do –

10 We'll put on a pose of indifference
and act
as if we obey rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra;
but we'll consult in secret,
and all the time keep an eye
on the Pāṇḍavas."

11 Duḥśāsana said, "Your words, uncle,
are just right:
your wisdom has always struck me
as perfect."

12 "Duryodhana," said Karṇa,
"we are all on your side.
O rājā! I can see there is complete agreement
on that.

13 The self-controlled Pāṇḍavas
will not return
before the pledged period of exile.
If, however,
they foolishly do so,
we'll beat them at dice again."

14 Rājā Duryodhana heard Karṇa
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and disconsolately
turned his face away.

15 Karna noticed this and,
his lovely eyes growing large,
he looked at Duryodhana,
Duḥśāsana and Śakuni;

16 Bursting with anger, gesticulating
with fierce self-confidence he said,
"Lords of the earth,
listen to me!

17 We are rājā Duryodhana's servants;
we are his hands; we must please him.
It seems we are sometimes slow
in doing this.

18 Let's climb into our chariots
this very instant,
and gallop armed into the forest
and kill the Pāṇḍavas.

19 With the Pāṇḍavas wiped out
and sent to the unknown land,
we and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
will have peace at last.

20 My conviction is –
as long as we harass them,
as long as they have
no friends and allies,
we will have no trouble
finishing them off."

21 They listened to Karṇa
and, repeatedly applauding his words,
said to the Sūta's son,
"You are right."

22 Each, fired by hopes of success,
climbed into his chariot
and drove off
to kill the Pāṇḍavas.

23 Pure-ātmaned Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana –
with his gift of divine insight,
saw them leave
and hurried there.

24 World-pūjā-receiving-*bhagavān* Vyāsa
ordered them to stop.
Then he hurried to meet
wisdom-inseeing Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the palace.

SECTION EIGHT

1 "Mahā-wise Dhṛtarāṣṭra," Vyāsa said,
"listen to me.
I will tell you something
for the good of the Kauravas.

2 O mahā-muscled one, I am not happy
to see the Pāṇḍavas
cheated at dice by Duryodhana and others
and sent into exile.

3 When the thirteenth year ends,
O Bharata,
they will remember the injustice
and retaliate terribly.

4 Why does your ill-ātmaned
wicked-minded son
want to kill the Pāṇḍavas
for the sake of the kingdom?

5 Stop the fool; don't let him stir;
if he persists
in seeking to kill them in the forest,
he may lose his own life.

6 You have the same clear vision
that wise Vidura has,
the goodness that Bhīṣma, Droṇa and I
are reputed to have.

7 Mahā-intelligent Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
family quarrel goes against dharma;
it is wrong.
O rājā! Don't encourage it.

8 So virulent is the jealousy
of Duryodhana, O rājā,
that he will wreak mahā-havoc
unless you restrain him.

9 Or, if you wish,
let your wicked-ātmaned son Duryodhana
go to the forest if he likes,
and be with them, or all by himself.

10 If the Pāṇḍavas succeed
in developing an affection for him,
then, O lord of men,
fortune will bless you.

11 It has been said, mahārāja,
that a man's nature
is made at birth
and sticks to him till he dies.

12 What do Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Vidura
have to say? And you?
Ought-to-be-done should be done now,
or it will never get done."

SECTION NINE

1 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one," Dhṛtarāṣṭra said,
"I detest gambling.
Fate must have conspired
to make me agree to it.

2 Bhīṣma, Vidura, Droṇa, Gāndhārī –
all were against the dice-game.
I have not the least doubt
delusion overtook us.

3 *Bhagavan*, revered one, strict-vowed ṛṣi,
I knew everything;
I couldn't stop mindless Duryodhana;
I loved my son."

4 "Royal son of Vicitravīrya,"
said Vyāsa, "you're right.
We know there is nothing greater
in this world than a son.

5 It was the celestial cow Surabhi
who explained to Indra
how a son is the most precious
of possessions.

6 Lord of the earth! Let me recount before you
the conversation
that took place on this subject between
Indra and Surabhi.

7 *Tāta,* dear one, a long time ago,
Surabhi, mother of cows,
was discovered weeping in heaven,
by Indra. Compassionately,

8 Indra said, 'Auspicious one,
why are you weeping?
Are the dwellers of heaven well?
Has any misfortune,
no matter how small,
affected humans or cows?'

9 'I see no misfortune in the heaven-world,'
she replied.
'I weep for my son.
O Indra, Kauśika, lord of the thirty deities,

10 Look at the way that peasant
is beating my son
with that stick –
look how he lashes out at him –

11 Look how my son collapses on the ground
– he is almost dying!
I can't bear to see it –
I suffer! O Devendra-Indra!

12 The stronger of any two
can bear pain –
but my son is thin and weak,
all bones and veins, O Vāsava-Indra.

13 He suffers, he totters under the yoke.
And so, Vāsava-Indra, I weep.
I see him struck
again and again and again;

14 Look, he nearly fell this time!
Oh, I cannot bear it –
I feel for him –
and tears roll down my face.'

15 'Splendid one,' said Śakra-Indra,
'you have thousands of sons,
all oppressed in this way.
Why this special sorrow?'

16 'I have thousands of sons, Śakra-Indra,
yes,' replied Surabhi,
'I love all equally, but I love more
the one who is weak and suffering.'

17 Indra heard Surabhi,
and was deeply moved.
He realized why a son is dearer
than one's own life.

18 Bhagavān Indra, chastiser of Pāka,
released a sudden shower of rain,
forcing the peasant
to stop ploughing.

19 O rājā! Be like Surabhi – let your love
flow equally to all your sons,
but let it flow more
to the weaker ones.

20 *Putraka!* My son, you are to me
like my son Pāṇḍu
and like mahā-wise Vidura.
I love you, so I say this.

[III:9:21-23; 10:1-5]

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21 You have a hundred and one children;
Pāṇḍu has only five.
They suffer,
they are in distress.

22 'How will Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons survive,
how will they prosper?' –
these are the thoughts that constantly
enter my mind.

23 If you wish to see
the entire Kaurava race alive,
order your son to make a settlement
with the Pāṇḍavas."

SECTION TEN

1 "Mahā-wise muni," Dhṛtarāṣṭra replied,
"you are right.
I see the truth of your words.
So do these kings.

2 What you say will be
for the good of the Kauravas
is identical with what Vidura,
Bhīṣma and Droṇa advised.

3 If you think I am worthy of it,
if you love the Kauravas,
instruct accordingly
my ill-ātmaned son Duryodhana."

4 "Coming to see us," said Vyāsa,
"after meeting
the Pāṇḍava brothers
is the bhagavān ṛṣi Maitreya.

5 He will do what he can
to persuade Duryodhana
to act in a manner
that will benefit his race.

6 What he advises, O descendant of the Kauravas,
should be accepted
and implemented without question.
If what the ṛṣi advises is ignored,
he will in anger
curse your son Duryodhana."

7 Saying this, Vyāsa left. Maitreya arrived
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and was respectfully received
by Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his sons.

8 After the traditional *arghya*-welcome
and other ceremonies,
Ambikā's son Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked him
the following questions:

9 "*Bhagavan*, revered one, has your journey
from Kurujāṅgala been smooth?
Are the five heroic Pāṇḍava brothers
contented?

10 Is it their intention to honour
the pledge they took?
Will the brotherly affection
of the Kauravas continue?"

11 "Going through Kurujāṅgala
in the course of my pilgrimage,"
said Maitreya, "I met Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
in the Kāmyaka forest.

12 His hair was matted, he wore deer-skin;
he looked like an ascetic.
Many munis
had gathered round him.

13 Then I learnt of the blunders
of your sons, mahārāja,
and the mahā-fearful consequences
resulting from the dice game.

14 That is why, seeking the good of the Kauravas,
I come here.
My lord, I have affection for you,
you have always pleased me.

15 So long as you and Bhīṣma
are alive, O rājā,
it is entirely wrong that your sons
should quarrel among themselves.

16 Rājā! You are the post
to which the bulls are tied.
You have power to punish and reward.
Why do you ignore
this terrible calamity
that is staring you in the face?

17 O Kaurava descendant,
the crimes committed in your sabhā
were like those of hardened thieves.
Men of tapasyā will spurn you."

18 Turning to conceited Duryodhana
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
bhagavān ṛṣi Maitreya
said gently:

19 "Mahā-muscled Duryodhana,
eloquent-tongued speaker,
listen to what I have to say
for your own good, O mahā-favoured one!

20 Rājā, in not falling out
with the Pāṇḍavas –
lies your good, the Pāṇḍavas' good,
the Kauravas' good, the world's good.

21 Those tigers-among-men are powerful in war.
They have the strength
of ten thousand elephants,
they are fierce like thunder.

22 They are truth-speaking,
they have manly vigour.
They have slaughtered rākṣasas,
any-form-assuming gods' enemies,

23 Among them Hiḍimba, Baka,
and Kirmīra.
At night Kirmīra's fearful
hill-like shape

24 Obstructed the passage
of the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas.
He was killed by Bhīma,
who is always eager to fight,

25 Like a tiger killing a small deer.
Rājā, it was Bhīma
who set out on a series of conquests,
and killed

26 The great bowman Jarāsaṁdha
who had the strength
of ten thousand elephants.
The Pāṇḍavas are related
to Vāsudeva-Krishna, the sons of Drupada
are their brothers-in-law.

27 How can a hero subject to age and death
fight them?
O bull-brave Bharata, make peace with them.
Take my advice – give up pride."

28 Duryodhana heard Maitreya;
he slapped his thigh
which was shaped
like the trunk of an elephant;
he smiled, and twiddled on the ground
with his toe.

29 He kept his head down,
but did not say a word.
When he saw Duryodhana insult him
by scratching

30 The ground with his toe,
Maitreya was furious.
Finest-of-munis Maitreya,
stirred to anger,

31 Appointed himself fate's agent
and decided to curse Duryodhana.
He touched water,
and, eyes flaming,

32 He cursed the ill-minded son
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, saying,
"Since you spurn my advice,
you will reap the fruits of pride.

33 When the great war takes place –
a war you have brought on yourself –
Bhīma will smash your thigh
with his club."

34 Lord-of-the-earth Dhṛtarāṣṭra heard the ṛṣi,
and tried to placate him,
saying,
"No, no, may it not be so."

35 "Rājā," said Maitreya, "if your son makes peace
with the Pāṇḍavas,
he will be freed of the curse;
otherwise, *tāta*, my friend, no."

36 Duryodhana's father, Indra-among-rājās,
asked Maitreya:
"Tell me, how did Bhīma
kill the rākṣasa Kirmīra?"

37 "Your son does not cate to listen to me,"
replied Maitreya;
"I have nothing to say.
Vidura will tell you. I am leaving."

38 Saying this, Maitreya left as he had come
(continued Vaiśampāyana).
Duryodhana left also,
worriedly thinking of Kirmīra's death.

SECTION ELEVEN

1 "Vidura," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"tell me the story of the killing of Kirmīra.
Tell me
how Bhīma and Kirmīra clashed."

2 “Listen to this stupendous feat of Bhīma,”
replied Vidura,
“which I heard
told again and again.

3 Defeated at dice, the Pāṇḍavas
travelled for three days and three nights,
till they came
to the forest of Kāmyaka.

4 At the fearful midnight hour,
when all are sleeping,
gruesome man-eating rākṣasas
roam in the forest.

5 Tapasyā-followers, cowherds
and other forest-dwellers
avoid the forest at that time,
afraid of the cannibals.

6 The Pāṇḍavas had just entered the forest
when a horrific red-eyed rākṣasa
blocked their way
with a lighted torch.

7 With horrendous face and outstretched arms
he stood
in the middle of the path
the Pāṇḍavas had taken.

8 Eight protruding teeth
Copper-coloured eyes
Flaming hair-locks
He stood there –
Like a cloud-mass
Drenched with sunlight
Charged with lightning
With a flock of cranes
Flying below it.

9 He roared
He screamed
Like fierce
Storm-clouds
He spread
Weird māyā
Around him.

10 Terrified by his roaring,
land and water birds
screamed and scattered
in all directions.

11 With deer, bears and wild buffaloes
running helter-skelter,
it seemed as if the forest itself
was running.

12 Swaying in the wind raised
by his giant thighs,
distant creepers clung in alarm
to copper-leaved trees.

13 A tremendous wind began to blow –
the sky darkened
with the clouds of dust
covering it.

14 That strange enemy
was to the Pāṇḍavas
what paralysing grief
is to the five senses.

15 He saw them from a distance,
wearing black deer-skin,
and he stood unmoving
like Maināka hill.

16 Seeing the grisly creature
for the first time,
lotus-eyed Draupadī trembled
and closed her eyes.

17 She ran like a river
among the five Pāṇḍava hills –
with her hair still dishevelled
by the hand of Duḥśāsana.

18 The Pāṇḍavas saw her swoon
and caught her –
like the five senses grasping
a pleasure-giving object.

19 Powerful Dhaumya chanted
appropriate mantras
and dispelled the paralysing māyā
in the Pāṇḍavas' presence.

20 When he saw the effects of his māyā
dissipating,
the vicious rākṣasa,
who could assume any form he liked,

21 Rolled his eyes fiercely,
he looked like all-consuming Kāla itself.
Highly intelligent rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
said to him:

22 'Who are you? Why are you here?
What do you want of us?'
The rākṣasa replied
to Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira:

23 'I am the brother of Baka.
My name is Kirmīra.
I live as I please
In this desolate Kāmyaka forest

24 I overpower humans.
I devour humans.
You are my food:
Today I'll eat you.'

25 O Bharata descendant Janamejaya
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Yudhiṣṭhira heard the wicked-ātmaned rākṣasa,
and he replied:

26 'I am Dharmaraja Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Pāṇḍu –
you may have heard of me.
I, my brothers,
Bhīma, Arjuna and others,

27 Have come to this forest,
which you rule,
in the course of our wanderings.
We wish to pass our exile here.'

28 Kirmīra said:
'Splendid!
Fate has been kind
To me!
At long last!

29 With upraised weapon,
I have searched
For Bhīma,
Today he walks
Into my hands!

30 It was Bhīma
In the guise
Of a Brahmin
Who mrudered Baka
In Vaitrakīya forest.

31 I loved Baka.
He was strong.
Bhīma tricked him.
And killed him.
Bhīma is not strong.

32 My *sakhā*-friend Hiḍimba
Was also murdered
By Bhīma,
And his sister raped.
All this happened
Long ago.

33 That fool Bhīma
Now comes here
At dead of night.
I'll kill him,
And avenge
My brother's murder.

34 I will avenge
Baka's murder,
I will appease
Baka's spirit.

35 I will pluck out
This rākṣasa-thorn today.
I will free
Myself of debts
I owe my friend
And my brother.

36 He escaped
From Baka;
He will not
Escape me.
Today, Yudhiṣṭhira,
I eat him
While you watch!

37 I will eat wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma
As Agastya
Ate mahā-antigod Vātāpi;
I'll chew him
And digest him.'

38 Dharmātmā, firm-in-truth Yudhiṣṭhira listened
to the rākṣasa and, agitated,
said, 'I won't allow it!'
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

39 Immediately mahā-muscled Bhīma uprooted
a seven arms'-length tall tree,
and stripped it
of its leaves.

40 Victory-winning Arjuna in a flash
strung his Gāṇḍīva-bow,
which could shatter
even thunderbolts.

41 Bhīma restrained Arjuna.
His cloud-roaring voice
boomed *Stop! Stop!*
at the fierce rākṣasa.

42 Bhīma tightened his waist-cloth.
He began massaging his palms
and biting his lower lip.
Suddenly,

43 The great hero Bhīma, wielding the tree,
rushed at the rākṣasa,
and hurled his weapon
like Indra's thunder.

44 It was like the mace
of the god of death Yama!
It landed with shattering force
on Kirmīra's head.

45 He remained unscathed.
In reply, he hurled his flaming torch,
dazzling like lightning,
at Bhīma.

46 Finest-of-warriors Bhīma
deflected it with his left foot
and it swerved back
at Kirmīra.

47 Kirmīra also uprooted a tree
and bore down on Bhīma,
like Yama charging
with his mace.

48 That tree-tearing duel resembled
the clash in the distant past
over a girl between the two brothers
Vālī and Sugrīva.

49 Thudding on the heads of the two heroes,
the trees splintered;
they were pulped
like lotus-stems hitting elephants.

50 Countless trees lay scattered
all over the mahā-forest,
like crushed reeds,
or like worn-out rags.

51 O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya!
That tree-duel between
the greatest rākṣasa and the finest of men
lasted but briefly.

52 Incensed, the rākṣasa lifted
a boulder
and hurled it at Bhīma.
Bhīma stood firm.

53 Like Svarbhānu- Rāhu
going to devour Bhāskara the sun,
his outstretched arms blocking the sun,
the rākṣasa rushed at Bhīma,
whom the boulder
left unharmed.

54 They grappled and dragged each other,
pushing and kicking;
they were like two intoxicated
interlocked bulls.

55 They were like two
sharp-toothed-and-clawed tigers.
They fought ceaselessly;
they fought bravely.

56 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma, proud of his strength,
conscious of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī looking on,
smarting under remembered insults
of Duryodhana,
seemed to swell
in heroic glory.

57 He caught hold of the rākṣasa
as one rutting elephant
seizes another.
The vicious rākṣasa,

58 Not outdone, did the same,
but Bhīma suddenly
dashed him to the ground
with shattering force.

59 Terrifying were the noises they made
as they fought on –
as if tall bamboos
were being split.

60 Vṛkodara-Bhīma flung the rākṣasa down again,
gripped his waist,
and began battering him,
like storms do trees.

61 Hurled down,
the rākṣasa seemed to weaken.
But he would not give up –
he kept pushing against Bhīma.

62 Noticing he was tiring,
wolf-waisted Bhīma
ringed the rākṣasa's body with his arm,
as if roping an animal.

63 The horrendous creature roared,
like a cracked *bheri*-trumpet.
Bhīma continued pressing
till the rākṣasa lost consciousness.

64 Bhīma lifted high
the exhausted rākṣasa
and without wasting time slew him
as he would a savage chest.

65 Pāṇḍava Bhīma thrust his knees
on the rākṣasa's chest
and, gripping his throat,
slowly began twisting the neck.

66 Then he dragged the now-limp,
eyes-half-closed body
of the bruised and swollen rākṣasa,
and shouted:

67 "Infamous wretch!
You don't have to wipe the tears
from Baka's and Hiḍimba's eyes –
you too are gone to the land of Yama!"

68 Bhīma said this and glared angrily
at the naked,
lifeless, ornamentless rākṣasa,
sprawled on the ground.

69 With the cloud-dark rākṣasa dead,
Yudhiṣṭhira thanked Bhīma.
Placing Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī in front,
they went to Dvaita forest.

70 O lord of men! O great Kaurava!
This is the story
of how Bhīma killed Kirmīra
with Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira's approval.

71 Freeing the forest of its thorny menace,
invincible man-of-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira
stayed there for a while
with Draupadī.

72 They attended on Draupadī –
all the five bull-brave Pāṇḍavas –
and gave unstinting praise
to wolf-waisted Vṛokodra-Bhīma.

73 It was only after Bhīma's prowess
had rid the forest of its thorny menace
that the Pāṇḍavas
entered peaceful Kāmyaka.

74 When I was passing through the forest,
I stumbled
on the giant, wicked-ātmaned rākṣasa
whom Bhīma had killed.

75 And I heard all about the feat
from the Brahmins
who had gathered around the Pāṇḍavas
in the forest."

76 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra heard the story
of the killing of the rākṣasa Kirmīra;
he sighed sorrowfully,
and was lost in thought.

SECTION TWELVE

1 Learning that the Pāṇḍavas
were living in the mahā-forest,
the Bhojas, Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas
hurried to the spot.

2 The relatives of the king of Pāñcāla,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the king of Cedi,
the famous mahā-heroic brothers,
the Kekayas,

3 Met the Pāṇḍavas in the forest.
Furious with rage,
they condemned Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons,
saying, "Let us do something."

4 Headed by Vāsudeva-Krishna,
the bull-brave Kṣatriyas gathered
around Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
Keśava-Krishna greeted him, and sadly said:

5 "The earth will drink the blood of Duryodhana,
Karṇa, Śakuni,
and wicked-ātmaned Duḥśāsana"
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

6 "We will kill all of them,
we will reduce into submission
all their friends
and their royal allies,

7 And place Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
on the throne.
The law of Sanātana Dharma is:
tricksters deserve to be killed."

8 Janārdana-Krishna was so outraged
by the ill-treatment of Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
that he would have destroyed all creatures.
Arjuna calmed him.

9 Seeing Keśava-Krishna upset,
Phālguna-Arjuna began to recite
all the glorious accomplishments
of mahā-ātmaned truth-glorifying

10 Immeasurable
Eternal Puruṣa
Truly puissant
Lord of Prajāpati
Lord of the worlds
Inseeing Viṣṇu.

11 "Long ago, Krishna," said Arjuna,
"you wandered on Gandhamādana mountain
for ten thousand years,
living as a spiritual recluse,
a where-night-falls-is-my-home
itinerant muni.

12 Long ago, Krishna, you survived
for eleven thousand years
beside the lake called Puṣkara,
subsisting only on water.

13 Long ago, Madhusūdana-Krishna,
you subsisted for one hundred years on air
on the towering hills
of Badari,
standing on one leg,
with both arms uplifted.

14 Long ago, Krishna,
you stayed for twelve years
on the banks of the Sarasvatī,
with your upper garment cast away,
your body so emaciated
that all your veins showed.

15 Long ago,
shining Krishna,
practising your strict tapasya, on the sacred plains
of deserving-to-be-visited-by-pious-people
Prabhāsa pilgrimage,
you stood on one leg for one thousand years.

16 It was Vyāsa who told me
you are the cause and the flow of life.
In seeing lord of the body-field! Kṣetrajña!
Keśava-Krishna!

[II:12:17-24]

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17 You are the beginning and end of life,
you are the Sanātana Yajña,
you are the storehouse
of tapasyā.

18 Krishna!
Slayer of earth-born Naraka!
You recovered and returned the ear-rings of Aditi.
You performed the first Horse-yajña.

19 Conqueror of the worlds!
Annihilator of the Daityas!
Annihilator of the Dānavas
Who gathered to challenge you!

20 Mighty-armed Mahābāho Keśava-Krishna!
Leaving Indra, lord of Śacī,
To rule in heaven,
You took birth among humans.

21 Foe-crusher!
Nārāyaṇa!
Hari and Brahmā and Soma!
Sūrya, Dharma, Dhātā, Yama, Anala!

22 Puruṣottama!
Vāyu, Vaiśravaṇa, Rudra!
Kāla, Earth, the Directions!
Self-Creator, Unborn One!
Guru of moving and unmoving life!

23 Slayer of Madhu,
Radiant Krishna!
God of gods,
Highest of the high!
Performer of yajñas
In the forest of Caitraratha!

24 Janārdana-Krishna! Punisher of mortals!
In each yajña you offered
Fulfilling gold-gifts
In hundreds and thousands.

25 Delighter of the Yadus!
As son of Aditi
You are Indra's younger brother –
Though in reality
You are the Supreme One Viṣṇu.

26 Foe-crushing Krishna!
When only an infant,
You took three steps,
And straddled heaven, sky and earth.

27 Spirit of all life! Bhūtātman-Krishna!
You straddle heaven and the sky.
You shine in the sun
And the sun shines.

28 Krishna! Lord!
Supreme One!
In your thousands of appearances
You have killed hundreds and hundreds
Of anti-gods, perpetrators of adharma.

29 You killed Mura and Pāśa,
Nisunda and Naraka,
And cleared the path
To Prāgjyotiṣa.

30 At Jaruthi you killed
Āhuti, Krātha, Śiśupāla and his allies,
Jarāsaṁdha, Śaibya and Śatadhanvat.

31 From your sun-dazzling, cloud-reverberating chariot
You defeated Rukmin in battle,
And won Bhoja's daughter Rukmiṇī as wife.

32 Angrily you slew Indradyumna
And the Yavana called Kaserumat.
You killed Śālva
And disintegrated his chariot Saubha.

33 So many kings killed by you!
On the banks of the Irāvatī
You killed king Bhoja,
Whose prowess equalled Kārtavīrya's.

34 Gopati and Tālaketu were also
Slain by you, Janārdana-Krishna.
You built the holy city of Dvārakā,
Replete with ṛṣis and pleasurable sights.

35 You will sink Dvārakā in the ocean
When the end comes.
Madhusūdana Krishna!
How can you do wrong, O Dāśārha-descendant,
Who have neither anger, nor envy,
Nor untruth, nor cruelty?

36 Undecaying one! Acyuta-Krishna!
Ṛṣis seek your protection
When you sit in your self-shining glory
And perform yajñas.

37 Madhusūdana-Krishna!
Great foe-crusher! Paraṁtapa!
You pull in all kings, within your ātman,
And preserve the worlds within you
At the end of a yuga.

38 O Krishna of the Vṛṣṇis! Vārṣṇeya!
When the yuga began,
From your lotus-navel flowered Brahmā,
Lord of the moving and unmoving life
Of all the worlds.

39 When the universe was created,
The fierce Dānava anti-gods Madhu and Kaitabha
Were bent on destroying Brahmā.
You saw through their wicked design,

40 And in anger you produced
Śambhu-Śīva from your head!
Śambhu – wielder of the trident!
Three-eyed deity!
Both Brahmā and Śīva,
Gods above all gods, took birth from you!

41 I heard all this from Nārada.
O Nārāyaṇa Krishna!
You performed the mahā-ritual sacrifice
In the Caitraratha forest.

42 Lotus-eyed Divinity!
The splendour of your feats,
Assisted by Baladeva-Balarāma,
Has no parallel.

43 They will never be equalled,
O Krishna,
O Dweller-with-Brahmins
On the peak of Kailāsa."

44 Saying this, Pāṇḍava Arjuna, who was like
mahā-ātmaned Krishna's own ātman,
kept silent.
Janārdana-Krishna said to Arjuna:

45 "You are me, and I am you.
What is mine, is yours.
Who hates you, hates me.
Who serves you, serves me.

46 Invincible hero, you are Nara,
I am Hari-Nārāyana.
We are the Nara-Nārāyana ṛṣis
now born in this world.

47 You are none but I,
and I, Pārtha-Arjuna, am none but you.
Bull-brave Bharata,
anyone can see we are not different."

48 Mahātmā Kesava-Krishna said this
in the assembly of angry rājās
in the forest
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

49 Pāñcālī-Draupadī, with Dhrstadyumna
and her other brothers,
came to lotus-eyed Krishna
who was sitting with his cousin-brothers.
Seeking his protection, Draupadī said angrily
to the worlds' refuge:

50 "You are the only Prajāpati,
You are the sole creator of the worlds –
These are the words of Asita and Devala.

Transcreated by P. Lal

51 You are Viṣṇu, O invincible Madhūsudana-Krishna,
You are the Sacrifice, Yajña,
You are the Sacrificer, Yaṣṭa,
You are the One who is Sacrifice-worthy, Yaṣṭya –
These are the words of Jamadagni-Paraśu-Rāma.

52 Puruṣottama! Finest of men!
You are Mercy and Truth, so the ṛṣis say;
You are the Yajña born from Truth –
These are the words of Kaśyapa.

53 You are the Lord of Sādhyas and Rudras,
You are the Lord and Creator of all –
These are the words of Nārada.

54 O tiger-among-men!
Like children playing with toys,
You play with the gods again and again,
Including Brahmā and Śaṅkara-Śiva and Śakra-Indra.

55 Your head covers the sky, Lord, Prabhu,
Your feet straddle the earth.
You are the Eternal Seed, Puruṣa Sanātana,
These worlds are the stomach.

56 To the rsis made pure by tapasyā
And the wisdom of the Vedas,
To the rsis who have darshan of the atman,
You are the supreme Goal.

57 You are the refuge of the rāja-ṛṣis
Who are singleminded in virtue,
Who never flee in battle,
Who are accomplished in all the dharmas
You are omnipresent,
The heart of all life,
The source of all activity,
The Ātman of all creatures.

58 The guardians of the worlds, the Lokapālas,
And the worlds themselves,
The groupings of the stars, Nakṣatras,
The ten points of the horizon, Diśās,
The sky, the moon, the sun –
Rest in you.

59 O mahā-muscled one,
The life of the worlds,
The death of the worlds –
The immortality of the worlds –
The activity of the worlds –
Rests in you.

60 Madhusūdana-Krishna!
Because you love me,
I will tell you my griefs.
You are the lord of all life,
Human as well as divine.

61 Radiant Krishna, I am the wife
Of Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons,
I am Dhṛṣṭadyumna's sister,
I am your loved-and-loving *sakhī*.
How did they even dare drag me in the *sabhā*?

62 I am only a woman.
I was in my period,
I had a single cloth on, blood-spotted,
I trembled and wept –
And they dragged me in the Kaurava court!

63 They saw me standing there in the *sabhā*
In my blood-stained dress
In front of all the invited rājās –
And Dhṛtarāṣṭra's ill-minded sons made fun of me!

64 Madhusūdana-Krishna!
Pāṇḍu's sons, the Pāñcālas, and the Vṛṣṇis were
present –
Yet they said they would enjoy me as their slave!

65 Krishna, Dharma makes me
Bhīṣma's daughter-in-law
And Dhṛtarāṣṭra's daughter-in-law.
Yet,
They wanted to make me their slave by force!

66 I blame the Pāṇḍavas,
Mahā-powerful heroes on the field of battle,
But silent spectators of their wife's dishonour,
their famed dharma-*patni.*

[III:12:67-75]

Transcreated by P. Lal

67 Grander-of-people! Janārdana-Krishna!
Dhik! Shame on Bhīma's strength,
On Paṛtha-Arjuna's Gāṇḍīva-bow –
Both kept silent when scoundrels insulted me.

68 Isn't this the time-honoured dharma
Followed by good men –
That a husband, no matter how weak,
Should defend the honour of his wife?

69 To protect one's wife
Is to protect one's children;
To protect one's children
Is to protect oneself, one's own ātman.

70 A husband's ātman is born
In the womb of his wife –
She is called Jāyā, One-Who-Gives-Birth.
A wife should cherish her husband,
Why? 'Because he is born in my womb.'

71 The Pāṇḍavas are always ready
To help others –
Me they did not help,
My husbands whom I begged for protection.

72 Five mahā-radiant sons are mine
By my five husbands –
If only for their sake, Janārdana-Krishna,
They should have protected me.

73 Prativindhya is Yudhiṣṭhira's,
Sutasoma wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma's,
Śrutakīrti Arjuna's,
Śatānīka Nakula's,

74 Śrutakarman Sahadeva's –
All of them splendid heroes, valiant-in-truth –
All as mahā-chariot-warriors
As your son Pradyumna.

75 All are brilliant bowmen,
Unconquerable on the battlefield.
How did they tolerate the insult of their mother
By Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons, less strong than they?

76 The Pāṇḍavas were cheated of their kingdom
by adharma
And made slaves;
And I, in my period, wearing a single cloth,
Was dragged into the *sabhā.*

77 Madhusūdana-Krishna!
What good is the Gāṇḍīva-bow
Which none can string except
Arjuna, Bhīma and you?

78 Krishna,
What's happened to Bhīma's famed strength
And Pārtha-Arjuna's prowess –
Duryodhana continues to live.

79 Madhusūdana-Krishna!
Wasn't it Duryodhana who drove
The never-harming-anyone Pāṇḍavas and their mother
Out of the kingdom
When they were celibate boys still pursuing their
studies?

80 Wasn't it wicked Duryodhana
Who mixed a large dose
Of fierce *kālakūṭa*-poison in Bhīma's food?

81 But Bhīma was not to die yet, Puruṣottama-Krishna,
So he swallowed the poison, Janārdana-Krishna,
And harmlessly digested it.

82 Krishna, wasn't it Duryodhana
Who, at Pramāṇa-koṭī, trussed up
Sleeping, unsuspecting Bhīma and, throwing him
In the Gaṅgā, returned to the city?

83 But mahā-powerful Bhīma, Kuntī's son,
Woke, freed himself,
And escaped from the river.

84 Wasn't it Duryodhana who got black
Venomous snakes to bite Bhīma? –
Yet Bhīma survived,

85 And killed all the snakes,
Using only his left hand.
He killed Duryodhana's favourite charioteer too.

86 Once in Vāraṇāvata when the children were sleeping
Unsuspecting with their mother, Kuntī,
Duryodhana set fire to the house of lac.
Who but he would do such a horrible deed?

87 She was so shaken and terrified
That she began wailing
In the middle of the flames: 'Save me!

88 Hai! Hai! What will I do?
How will I escape? I will die,
And my sons will die –
And they are but children.'

89 It was mahā-muscled wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
Swift and strong as the wind,
Who reassured her and his brothers:

90 'I will jump up into the air
Like Garuḍa, king of birds, son of Vinatā.
Do not be afraid of this fire.'

91 Picking her up on his left hip,
And rājā Yudhiṣṭhira on his right,
The twins on each shoulder,
And Arjuna on his back,

92 Valiant Bhīma leapt right across the flames,
And rescued his mother and brothers.

93 They camped that night in a mahā-forest
Which was the haunt of the rākṣasa Hiḍimba.

94 They were utterly tired and depressed;
They slept.
A rākṣasī named Hiḍimbā saw them

95 Sleeping on the ground.
She saw Bhīma,
And was moved by love for him.

96 The lovely-to-look-at, gentle woman
Placed Bhīma's feet in her lap
And began softly massaging them.

97 The truly-valiant, invincible Bhīma
Woke up and asked,
'Faultless one, what do you want?'

98 The faultless rākṣasī,
Who could assume any shape she liked,
Replied to Bhīma:

99 'Leave this place! Quickly!
My brave brother will come and kill you.
You have no time to lose!'

100 Bhīma replied proudly:
'I am not afraid of him.
If he comes, I will kill him.'

101 The horrendous rākṣasa heard their talk,
And rushed at them, screaming.
He was a frightening creature.

102 'Hiḍimbā,' he said,
'Who are you talking to?
Bring him here. Now!
I will eat him.'

103 Because she was gentle,
The perfect-featured, blameless rākṣasī
Did not say a word.

104 The rākṣasa-cannibal,
Screaming, rushed violently at Bhīma.

105 He lunged at Bhīma,
And angrily gripped, first, one hand of Bhīma,

106 Then the other.
Suddenly he struck a blow as fierce
As Indra's thunderbolt.

107 Mahā-muscled wolf-waisted Bhīma,
As soon as the rākṣasa seized his hand,
Flew into a towering rage.

108 A fierce duel took place
Between Bhīma and Hiḍimba,
Both expert in the handling of weapons –
As fierce as that between Vāsava-Indra and Vṛtra.

109 O defectless Krishna!
Mahā-heroic Bhīma played
With the rākṣasa
Until Hiḍimba was exhausted – then killed him.

110 With Hiḍimba killed,
Bhīma placed Hiḍimbā in front
And pushed ahead with his brothers.
This Hiḍimbā became the mother of Ghaṭotkaca.

111 Accompanied by their mother,
Followed by Brahmins,
The great foe-chastisers reached Ekacakra.

112 Vyāsa was their loving counsellor during this journey.
Arriving in Ekacakra, the strict-vowed Pāṇḍavas

113 Killed a mahā-powerful man-eating rākṣasa called Baka,
A ferocious creature, as hideous as Hiḍimba.

114 After killing Baka, finest-of-heroes Bhīma
Came to the capital of Drupada.

115 Krishna,
Exactly as you won Bhīṣmaka's daughter Rukmiṇī,
Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna won me in the capital.

116 Madhusūdana-Krishna!
He won me in the svayamvara
By accomplishing the almost impossible feat
Of defeating the assembled kings.

117 Krishna,
My griefs are many.
My days pass in sorrow.
Dhaumya is with us,
But the mother of my husbands is not here.

118 They are strong like lions, the Pāṇḍavas.
Why do they sit and do nothing,
Even when I am insulted?

119 How long must I suffer like this?
How long must the cruel and cowardly,
The wicked and weak continue to insult me?

120 I was born into a noble family.
My birth was divinely ordained.
I am the beloved wife of the Pāṇḍavas
And the daughter-in-law of mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍu.

121 Krishna,
Madhusūdana,
Can you believe that I,
So nobly born, so faithful as a wife,
Was dragged by my hair in the presence
Of the five Pāṇḍavas; each of them
like Indra himself?"

122 Saying this (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Soft-spoken Draupadī covered her face
With her lotus-bud hands and started sobbing.

123 The grief-rich tears of the Pāñcāla princess
Drenched her heavy, round, lovely breasts
Graced with all the auspicious marks.

124 She wiped her eyes again and again.
She heaved deep sighs again and again.
Then, in an anger-filled and grief-choked voice,
She said:

125 "Husbands, sons, relatives, brothers, father,
I have no one. No one. No one.
Not even you, Madhusūdana-Krishna.

126 You see me insulted by low-class wretches,
And you sit in silence.
How can I ever forget the way
Karṇa mocked me in the sabhā?

127 Keśava, Krishna,
There are four reasons you must help me.
Am I not related to you?
Don't you respect me as a woman?
Am I not your loved-and-loving *sakhī*?
Haven't you vowed to protect me?"

128 Krishna said to her in the presence
Of the heroes (continued Vaiśampāyana):
"Noble lady,
The wives of those with whom you are angry

129 Will weep over the arrow-pierced bodies
Of their husbands bloodily killed
By dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna.
Do not cry. I will do for the Pāṇḍavas
All there is in my power to do.

130 Listen to the truth.
You will be rānī of rājās!
The skies will fall,
The Himālayas shatter,
The earth split in two,

131 The ocean's waters dry up –
But what I promise you, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
Will not fail to happen."
When Draupadī heard this,

132 O maharāja Janamejaya,
She glanced sideways at her third husband.
Arjuna said to Draupadī:

133 "Lady with lovely copper-coloured eyes,
Do not cry.
What Madhusūdana-Krishna promises, must happen.
Lovely one, devī, that much is certain."

134 "I will kill Drona," said Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
"Śikhaṇḍin will kill Pitāmaha Bhīṣma,
Bhīma will kill Duryodhana,
And Dhanañjaya-Arjuna will kill Karṇa.

135 Sister, with Krishna's and Balarāma's help
We can defeat even Vrtra-slaying Indra.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons are nothing."

136 All the heroes turned their faces to Vāsudeva-Krishna.
Mahā-muscled Keśava-Krishna said to them:

SECTION THIRTEEN

1 “Lord of the earth, if I had been in Dvārakā
Or anywhere near at the time this happened,
This would not have happened.

2 Even if uninvited by Ambikā’s son Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
rājā Duryodhana, and the Kauravas,
I would have come
To the dice-game in the sabhā
And argued them out of it, explaining its danger.

3 I would have managed to get
Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, and Bāhlīka on my side.
I would have said
To the son of Vicitravīrya, Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

4 ‘O Indra-among-rājās,
don’t let your sons gamble.’
I would have explained
all the evils of gambling
by which you, Yudhiṣṭhira,
have been so humiliated,

5 And how the same evils deprived
Vīrasena’s son Nala
of his kingdom long ago.
Gambling is the root of many sorrows.

6 I would have explained to him
the obsession
that takes hold of gamblers.
I would have shown

7 The truth of the remark
that lusting, gambling, hunting and drinking
are the four evils
that are born of kāma and lead to ruin.

8 Those who know
the wisdom of the śāstras
say that all these are evil,
but they specially condemn gambling.

9 Gambling leads to loss of enjoyed wealth
and squandering
of yet-to-be-enjoyed wealth.
It leads to bitter quarrels.

10 O mahā-muscled one,
I would have carefully explained
the dangers of gambling and other evils
to Ambikā's son. Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

11 And I think he would have listened
to my words,
and the welfare of the Kauravas
would have been assured, and dharma cherished.

12 And if, for some reason, O Indra-among-rājās,
he rejected my medicinal sweet words,
I would have forced him
to accept them.

13 And if his courtiers – many of them ill-wishers
posing as his well-wishers –
had tried to influence him,
I would have killed the gamblers.

14 But I was not in Ānarta territory
at the time;
that is why all these misfortunes
have been your lot.

15 When, son of Pāṇḍu, I returned to Dvārakā,
then, O finest of the Kauravas,
I got news of your misfortunes
from Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki.

16 I was filled with great anxiety,
O Indra-among-rājās,
and I rushed as soon as I could
to see you.

17 Aho! What a terrible calamity,
O bull-brave Bharata,
seeing you and your brothers
reduced to this state!"

SECTION FOURTEEN

1 "Krishna, delighter of the Vṛṣṇis," asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
"why were you absent?
Where did you go,
and what did you do there?"

2 "Bull brave Bharata, foremost of the Kauravas,"
said Krishna,
"I was on a mission to destroy Śālva's capital –
let me explain.

3 You will recall that during the Rājasūya yajña,
the son of Damaghoṣa,
mahā-radiant, mahā-muscled,
mahā-famous, heroic rājā Śiśupāla,

4 Because he was wicked-ātmaned,
was killed by me
because he could not tolerate *arghya*-homage
being offered to me.

5 When Śālva got news
of Śiśupāla's death,
he was furious and rushed to Dvārakā
in my absence.

6 O rājā! In his splendid everywhere-traversing
Saubha chariot he drove into the city
and waged ruthless war
against the young Vṛṣṇi chiefs.

7 That ill-minded man succeeded
in killing some of them;
then he began a systematic destruction
of the city's public gardens.

8 O mahā-muscled one!
Śālva is reported to have said,
'Tell me where the son of Vasudeva –
Krishna, disgrace of the Vṛṣṇis – has fled.

9 For I will chase him, O Ānartas,
and humble his pride.
I will trace him
wherever he's gone.

10 I shall return only
after finishing off that murderer
of Kaṁsa and Keśi –
I swear so by my weapon!'

11 The rājā of the Saubha-chariot kept shouting
'Where is he? Where is he?'
and continued
his aggressive onslaught.

12 'Śiśupāla's murder has infuriated me!
I'll pack off
that vicious, mean and treacherous killer
to Yama's abode.

13 Evil scoundrel that he is –
killing lord-of-the-earth Śiśupāla,
my own brother!
I promise to kill him right now!

14 My brother was so young, he was a rājā –
and Krishna killed him offguard
and not on a battlefield –
I'll kill Janārdana-Krishna!'

15 That's how he kept ranting against me,
O mahārāja,
as he coursed through the sky
in his flying-at-will Saubhā-chariot.

16 When I returned to Dvārakā,
I was told of all the ugly accusations
Mārtikāvataka's rājā Śālva
had made about me.

17 So, rājā, descendant of Kaurava,
I became enraged too –
so enraged that I decided
I would have to kill him,

18 For I had heard of his cruelty
towards the Ānartas,
his vilification of me,
and his impossible arrogance.

19 The first part of the plan
was to destroy the Saubha.
I tracked Śālva down
to an ocean island.

20 I blew on my ocean-produced conch,
the Pāñcajanya,
and challenged him to meet me
in open battle.

21 A fierce clash took place
between me and the Dānava-antigods
I routed them all
and forced them into submission.

22 This is the reason, O mahā-muscled one,
I was not able
to be present with you.
As soon as I heard
of the unjust dice-game in Hastināpura,
I rushed to you."

SECTION FIFTEEN

1 "Vāsudeva-Krishna," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"Mahā-minded one! I am not satisfied.
Mahā-muscled one! Tell me in detail
about the manner of Śālva's death."

2 "Mahā-muscled king," replied Krishna,
"as soon as he heard
that Śiśupāla had been killed,
Śālva drove to Dvāravatī-Dvārakā.

3 Son of Pāṇḍu, supremely ill-ātmaned Śālva
deployed his forces
so that he could attack from all sides,
and from above as well.

4 He took up position in the sky,
and attacked the city.
A steady shower of arrows
was ordered.

5 The city's walls glittered
with fluttering flags.
Walls, turrets, arches, machines,
soldiers, miners,

6 Were its defences; the outer walls
were of wood with iron spikes;
there were machines
for hurling fire-balls;
the city was abundantly stocked
with weapons and provisions.

7 O rājā! It had deerskin water-bags,
trumpets, tabors,
drums, lances, spears, *śataghnīs*,
and ploughshares;

8 Rockets, stone-missiles, battle-axes,
iron-reinforced shields,
contraptions for flinging
steel pellets and fire-brands –

9 All kinds of weapons, in fact,
recommended in the military śāstras.
War-chariots kept guard.
Gada, Sāmba, Uddhava,

10 And other great heroes, all of them
with considerable battle experience,
of noble birth,
were on our side.

11 They took up strategic positions
along with horse-units
and the advance-guard,
for the defence of the city.

12 For maximum safety, Ugrasena,
Uddhava and others
proclaimed that drinking of liquor
was now forbidden.

13 The Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas knew
sure death awaited them
if they got intoxicated;
so they remained sober and alert.

14 The advance guards saw to it
that actors, singers and dancers
were all made to leave
the Ānarta territory.

15 The bridges on all the rivers
were destroyed,
and boats prohibited from plying.
Trenches were dug

16 All around the city,
and pointed poles embedded in them;
A *krośa* of land around the city
was pitted and fire-mined.

17 Everything was done
to make our city impregnable.
All conceivable weapons
were stored in the armouries.

18 O finest of the Bharatas! It couldn't be said
that we were unprepared.
With all our fortifications,
the city resembled Indra's city.

19 And, O rājā, it was ensured
that none could either enter
or leave the city of the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas
without the password.

20 O Kaurava Indra-among-rājās!
All the roads of the city
were packed
with war elephants and horses.

21 The wages, rations, weapons,
uniforms and other supplies
were such as pleased
the hosts of soldiers.

22 There wasn't one soldier not paid in time,
and not paid well;
not one forced to enlist;
not one not a hero.

23 O lotus-eyed rājā,
Dvārakā was very well defended indeed
by the strategy
of rājā Ugrasena."

SECTION SIXTEEN

1 Vāsudeva-Krishna continued:
"Śālva, lord of the Saubha,
attacked Dvārakā
with countless elephants and soldiers.

2 The fourfold army led by him
camped on a stretch of level land
plentifully supplied
with water.

3 With the exception of ceremation-grounds,
temples, sacred trees, and ant-hills,
his troops occupied
every bit of land.

4 All roads to the city of Dvārakā
were barricaded,
all secret outlets blocked
by Śālva's troops.

5 O descendant of Kuru,
Śālva pounced on Dvārakā
like Garuḍa,
with an army that possessed

6 All manner of weapons,
was highly-skilled in warfare,
assisted by chariot, elephant,
and cavalry units,

7 Flying colourful pennants and flags –
an army
of well-fed, well-paid heroes
of the bow and the chariot.

8 Seeing the army of Śālva
marching on their city,
the young Vṛṣṇis chiefs decided
to give battle.

9 The haughtiness of rājā Śālva
was not something they could tolerate;
Cārudeṣṇa, Sāmba,
and the mahā-chariot-hero Pradyumna,

10 Resplendent in armour and war-ornaments,
with flags fluttering
on their chariots,
clashed with the Śālva heroes.

11 Sāmba with his bow attacked
the forces of Kṣemavṛddhi,
Śālya's minister
and commander-in-chief.

12 O bull-brave Bharata!
The arrows of Jāmbavatī's son Sāmba
fell like a continuous shower of rain sent down
by thousand-eyed Sahasradṛk-Indra.

13 But the commander-in-chief, Kṣemavṛddhi,
O mahārāja,
withstood the shower
and remained firm as the Himālayas.

14 O Indra-among rājās! Then Kṣemavṛddhi,
with the help of his powers of māyā,
released a counter-shower
of arrows on Sāmba.

15 But Sāmba, with an equally powerful
māyā-manoeuvre,
succeeded in shooting a thousand arrows
at his adversary's chariot.

16 Wounded and outfought,
Śālva's commander-in-chief
Kṣemavṛddhi retreated
on his swift-horsed chariot.

17 When the cruel general
of Śālva's army fled,
a fierce Daitya anti-god named Vegavat
attacked my son.

18 O Indra-among-rājās! Heroic Sāmba,
enhancer of the glory of the Vṛṣṇis,
undismayed, took the brunt of the attack
without flinching.

19 Truly valiant, incredibly powerful Sāmba
whirled a club-missile furiously
and hurled it in the direction
of Vegavat.

20 Struck by the club,
Vegavat crumpled on the ground
like a withered, storm-torn,
root-decayed giant tree.

21 With the removal of the mahā-antigod
from the field of battle,
my son rushed headlong
inside the enemy's ranks.

22 A Dānava anti-god called Vivindhya –
a mahā-chariot-hero and mahā-bowman –
rushed fiercely
at Cārudeṣṇa.

23 O rājā! The encounter that took place
between Cārudeṣṇa and Vivindhya
was as fierce as the duel
between Vāsava-Indra and Vṛtra.

24 Mutually enraged, the two heroes
roared like mahā-powerful lions
and harassed each other
with showers of arrows.

25 Charging it with mantras,
Rukmiṇī's son Cārudeṣṇa fired
a sun-splendid, fire-radiant,
foe-shattering mahā-weapon.

26 Flaming with anger, my mahā-chariot-hero son,
challenging Vivindhya,
shot the weapon.
Vivindhya fell down dead.

27 With Vivindhya's death,
the army of Śālva lost heart.
Śālva came in his travelling-at-will chariot
Saubha.

28 O mahā-muscled one!
When they saw Śālva in his Saubha-chariot,
the soldiers of Dvārakā
were temporarily confused.

29 O Kaurava mahārāja!
It was Pradyumna who at that time
drove among them and restored the Ānartas' spirits.
He said:

30 'Soldiers, fight on! Stay with me!
See me fight –
and then fight!
I will repulse Śālva and his Saubha!

31 O Yādavas, see me
as I today destroy
the Saubha-lord's army
with my serpent-sharp missiles.

32 Pick up heart! Do no fear!
Today I'll kill the wicked-ātmaned Saubha-rājā!
When I attack,
that will be the end of the Saubha!"

33 O Yudhiṣṭhira! Heroic son of Pāṇḍu!
They heard Pradyumna's rousing words,
and continued
to fight bravely."

SECTION SEVENTEEN

1 Vāsudeva-Krishna continued:
"Saying this, Rukmiṇī's son Pradyumna
climbed into his golden chariot
pulled by horses in armour,

2 Flying the pennant
of an open-mouthed *makara*-monster.
It was as fearful as Antaka-Yama.
His horses seemed to fly not gallop
as Pradyumna rushed
at Śālva.

3 He was armed with sword and quiver,
his fingers were protected
by leather-sheaths,
his bow had the dazzle

4 Of lightning. He shifted the bow
from one hand to the other,
as if mocking the enemy;
he spread confusion
in the ranks
of the Saubha-soldiers.

5 He continued killing his enemies
with supreme ease;
it seemed the arrows flowed from his bow
seamlessly.

6 His face betrayed no emotion;
he did not tremble. Such incredible valour!
They heard only his lion-loud roars
suggesting his prowess.

7 The *timi* sea-monster in his pennant,
the great fish-devourer
on his golden chariot,
struck fear in Śālva's warriors.

8 Foe-crushing Pradyumna swooped
on Śālva
who was waiting on the battlefield
prepared for this.

9 Continuer of the Kuru dynasty!
The challenges shouted by Pradyumna
in that mahā-battle
made Śālva furious.

10 His mind made up, livid with anger,
destroyer-of-the-cities-of-his-enemies Śālva
attacked from his splendid,
incalculably swift chariot.

11 The citizens watched the terrifying clash
between Śālva and Pradyumna,
resembling the encounter
between Vāsava-Indra and Bali.

12 O heroic one! Śālva's golden chariot
was māyā-armed;
pennants fluttered on it;
quivers glittered.

13 O Kaurava lord! Śālva stood in his chariot,
and launched a volley
of incredibly fierce arrows
on Pradyumna.

14 Pradyumna replied
with an equally powerful
and baffling counter-shower,
shot with all the strength he possessed.

15 Wounded, the Saubha-rājā Śālva
did not surrendor.
Instead, he let loose a stream
of fire-tipped arrows,

16 Which my māhā-powerful son
successfully repulsed.
Immediately, Śālva replied with a second stream
of incandescent missiles.

17 O Indra-among-rājās! Rukmiṇī's son Pradyumna
was wounded, but he managed
to fire a special arrow
fashioned for foe-paralysis.

18 It pierced Śālva's armour
and struck near his heart.
He collapsed on the ground.
He was unconscious.

19 Seeing the heroic rājā Śālva
lying senseless on the ground,
the anti-god Dānava chiefs
fled below the earth.

20 O lord of the earth! When the soldiers
saw their Saubha-lord lying senseless,
they broke into cries
of 'Hai! Hai!'

21 But it did not take long
for Śālva to recover his senses.
The mahā-powerful hero rose,
and again attacked

22 Heroic Pradyumna, this time
severely wounding him in the throat;
he lay weakened
in his chariot.

23 Mahārāja! Seeing Pradyumna wounded,
Śālva emitted
a horrendous lion-like roar;
the whole earth shuddered.

24 O Bharata-descendant! As my son lay unconscious,
Śālva continued to fire
an endless volley
of terrifying weapons at him.

25 O finest of the Kauravas! Repeatedly wounded,
Pradyumna lay there unconscious,
fallen in his chariot
in the middle of the battlefield."

SECTION EIGHTEEN

1 “With bravest of the brave Pradyumna wounded,”
continued Vāsudeva-Krishna,
“the Vṛṣṇis and the Andhakas
seemed to lose heart.

2 The Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis kept saying ‘Hai! Hai!’
On the other side,
the enemy was overjoyed by news
of skilful Pradyumna’s collapse.

3 Pradyumna’s expert charioteer, Dāruka’s son,
saw his master lying unconscious
and drove away swiftly
from the field.

4 The chariot had not travelled far
when Pradyumna
regained consciousness.
He picked up his bow and said:

5 ‘Sūta’s son, what are you doing?
Why are you driving away from battle? –
This is not the dharma
of a Vṛṣṇi hero!

6 Sūta’s son, has the sight of Śālva
bewildered you?
Is the battle too much for you?
Tell me the truth.’

7 ‘Janārdana Krishna’s son,’ replied the charioteer,
‘I am neither confused nor afraid.
Keśava-Krishna’s son,
I think it’s difficult to defeat Śālva.

8 That is why I have decided to withdraw
from the field.
He’s stronger than us.
It is the duty of a charioteer
to protect
his unconscious chariot-hero.

9 Just as you protect me,
I try to protect you.
Noble one! I am only doing my duty
by retreating.

10 Mahā-muscled one! You are single,
the Dānava anti-gods are many.
Son of Rukmiṇī, I do this
seeing that you are outnumbered.'

11 O descendant-of-Kuru Yudhiṣṭhira!
When the *makara*-flagged hero
heard this, he ordered,
'Turn the chariot back!

12 Son of Dāruka,
never do this again.
Never, Sūta's son, retreat from battle
as long as I am alive.

13 He is not a Vṛṣṇi's son
who leaves the battlefield,
or who kills an enemy at his feet
shouting *Help!*,

14 Or who kills a woman,
a boy, an old woman,
or a helpless, weaponless soldier,
or an unchcarioted hero.

15 You are a Sūta;
you know a Sūta's duties.
Remember also, son of Dāruka,
a Vṛṣṇi's dharma.

16 If you know at all
what is expected of Vṛṣṇis
on the battlefield,
you will never do this again.

17 What will my invincible father Mādhava-Krishna,
the elder brother of Gada,
think when he hears
I ran away from the battlefield
with arrows in my back?

18 And what will Keśava-Krishna's elder brother,
mahā-muscled Balarāma,
who wears blue and loves to drink,
say when he returns?

19 What will the mahā-bowman
lion-among-men Śinī's grandson Satyaki say
when he hears I ran away?
And brave Sāmba,

20 And Cārudeṣṇa, and Gada,
and Sāraṇa,
and mahā-muscled Akrūra –
what will they all say?

21 And the wives of Vṛṣṇis heroes,
who have always thought me
brave, disciplined, noble, manly –
what will they say?

22 Won't they say,
Here's Pradyumna the coward who fled in fear
the field of battle. Shame on him!
Will they say *Well done*?

23 Sūta's son, mockery and shame
to me and men like me are like death.
Never again
must you leave the field.

24 My father Hari-Krishna, slayer of Madhu,
has left the city in my charge and gone
to the lion-among-Bharatas Yudhiṣṭhira's yajña.
He'll never forgive me.

25 Sūta's son, when Kṛtavarman decided
to oppose Śālva,
I stopped him; I said,
Leave him to me.

26 Hṛdika's son Kṛtavarman respected my words
and stayed back.
If I leave the battlefield,
how will I face that mahā-chariot-hero?

27 When the mahā-muscled, invincible lotus-eyed hero,
wielder of the conch, mace, and *cakra*,
returns,
what will I say to him?

28 What will I say to Sātyaki,
Baladeva-Balarāma,
and other Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas
who have the highest respect for me?

29 Sūta's son, to be taken from the field
unconscious with arrows in my back –
better that I should die
than that!

30 Dāruka's son, turn back the chariot
this very instant!
Never do this again,
no matter how grave the danger.

31 Sūta's son, life means nothing to me
if I am dragged
from the battlefied
with arrows in my back.

32 Tell me, Sūta's son,
have you ever seen me
run away from battle like a coward?
Tell me!

33 Son of Dāruka, it was wrong of you
to leave the field
without my permission.
Turn back – now!'"

SECTION NINETEEN

1 Vāsudeva-Krishna continued:
"The charioteer replied gently
to Pradyumna, foremost of heroes,
in these pleasing words:

2 'Son of Rukmiṇī,
I am not afraid
to drive horses into battle.
I know a Vṛṣṇi's war-duties.

3 Charioteers are given special training
to protect their masters.
I saw
that you were wounded

4 Seriously by the arrows of Śālva,
and had fallen down unconscious.
That was why
I took you away.

5 Son of Keśava-Krishna,
now that you have regained consciousness,
watch me lead you
into the heat of battle!

6 I am Dāruka's son,
I have been well trained.
I will fearlessly drive you
into Śālva's battle-formation.'

7 Saying this,
he flicked the reins
and galloped the horses furiously
to the battlefield.

8 Urged by the whip and the expert reins,
the splendid horses
zig-zagged, circled, in maṇḍalas,
cut right and left,

9 Speeding with superb ease,
so graceful, so fluent,
they seemed to be flying
in the sky.

10 They seemed to be in tune
with the wishes of Dāruka's son;
their vibrant hooves seemed
not to touch the ground.

11 Dāruka's son manoeuvred the chariot
so skilfully
in and out of Śālva's ranks
that all watched, marvelling.

12 The rājā of the Saubha,
humiliated by Pradyumna's skill,
fired three arrows in the direction
of Dāruka's son,

13 Who, completely unperturbed,
continued to weave the chariot
in and out of Śālva's ranks
exactly as before.

14 The Saubha-rājā Śālva
let off another sharp volley of arrows
at Rukmiṇī's heroic son
(continued Krishna).

15 Foe-crushing, heroic Pradyumna,
with supreme dexterity,
smilingly pulverised the arrows
with a counter-shower.

16 Seeing his attack frustrated,
the Saubha-rājā, using
the fearful māyā of anti-gods,
fired another volley.

17 Pradyumna disintegrated
this mahā-powerful Daitya māyā
with the help of his Brāhma-weapon,
and hurled his winged missiles,

18 Which sliced through
and repulsed the anti-god's arrows,
and bloodily struck Śālva's head and chest.
He collapsed.

19 Pradyumna readied
another foe-annihilating arrow
at the wounded king Śālva,
even as his foe fell –

20 An arrow honoured by the Dāśārhas,
flaming like fire,
venomous like a snake!
When that arrow
was nocked to the bow,
all sighed in fear, 'Hai! Hai!'

21 The gods, led by Indra,
and lord of wealth Dhaneśvara-Kubera,
despatched Nārada and the wind-god Vāyu
to Pradyumna.

22 Both approached Rukmiṇī's son
and gave him the divine message:
'It is not yours
to kill rājā Śālva.

23 There is no one
whom this arrow cannot kill.
But Śālva is not fated to be killed by you.
Unstring it.

24 Mahābāho! O mahā-muscled one!
The Creator has ordained
that Devakī's son Krishna will kill Śālva.
Do not nullify the Creator's will.'

25 Delighted by this,
Pradyumna instantly removed
the incomparable arrow from his bow
and replaced it in his splendid quiver.

26 Then Śālva stood up,
ashamed,
wounded by Pradyumna's arrows,
and fled from the battlefield.

27 O Indra-among-rājās! Repulsed by the Vṛṣṇis,
cruel Śālva climbed inside his Saubha
and fled skywards,
leaving Dvārakā behind."

SECTION TWENTY

1 “I returned to the city of the Ānartas,”
continued Vāsudeva-Krishna,
“after Śālva had fled,
just after your Rājasūya mahā-yajña.

2 Mahārāja! I found the city bereft of its splendour:
no chants from the Vedas,
no *vaṣaṭkāras,* no sacred rituals;
lovely girls without ornaments . . .

3 The public parks and gardens
desolate, unrecognisable . . .
I was disturbed;
I asked Hṛdika’s son Kṛtavarman,

4 ‘Tiger among men,
why are all the Vṛṣṇi men and women
so disconsolate?
Tell me everything.’

5 And Hṛdika’s son Kṛtavarman
narrated the whole story
of Śālva’s invasion of Dvārakā,
his defeat and retreat.

6 Hearing him, O finest of Bharatas,
I made up my mind
that I would not rest
until I killed rājā Śālva.

7 Finest of Bharatas,
I reassured the citizens
and consoled rājā Āhuka-Ugrasena
and Anakadundubhi-Vasudeva,

8 As well as the other chiefs
of the Vṛṣṇis,
saying, ‘Bull-brave Yādavas,
stay here and take care

9 While I go and kill Śālva.
I promise you:
I will not return to Dvārakā
until I have killed him.

10 I will kill him
and destroy his Saubha-city.
Sound the foe-frightening
dundubhi-trumpet thrice!'

11 O bull-brave Bharata!
My words encouraged and inspired them;
they said cheerfully,
'Go, and crush the enemy of Dvārakā.'

12 I received their blessings,
the Brahmins chanted auspicious words;
I offered my *praṇāmas*
to them

13 And Bhava-Śiva;
I yoked Śaibya and Sugrīva to my chariot,
I blew the incomparable Pāñcajanya-conch,
the wheels thundered,

14 And, surrounded by the unbeaten soldiers
of my fourfold army,
always ready for victory,
I galloped off.

15 Passing through kingdoms,
crossing many mountains and forests,
lakes and rivers,
I came to Mārtikāvata.

16 Here I got information
that tiger-among-men Śālva was flying
in his Saubha near the ocean.
I went there.

17 I saw him riding in his Saubha
above the billowing ocean,
resplendently ensconced
in that precious-metalled chariot.

18 That vicious-ātmaned man saw me from a distance.
Yudhiṣṭhira, that wicked-ātmaned man
seemed to smile challenge after challenge
at me.

19 I fired many heart-piercing arrows at him
from my Śārṅga-bow;
they fell short;
I was furious and baffled.

20 That indomitably evil son
of a Daitya anti-god
replied with a torrential
thousand-arrowed shower.

21 O Bhārata descendant! He assailed my soldiers,
my charioteer, my horses.
We withstood the arrows,
and fought on.

22 Śālva's soldiers,
placed at an advantage,
shot hundreds of thousands
of curved arrows at us.

23 The anti-gods pinned down my horses,
my chariot and charioteer Dāruka
with a volley
of special marrow-piercing arrows.

24 So thick was the barrage
that for a while
I could not see my chariot, my horses,
and my charioteer Dāruka.

25 Son of Kuntī,
I replied with hundreds of thousands
of mantra-charged arrows,
shot with supernormal skill.

26 But the Saubha-chariot
was nearly one *krośa* away,
and my soldiers
could not even spot it.

27 They stood like spectators
at an amusing spectacle,
encouraging me with lion-like roaring
and clapping.

28 The lovely-winged arrows
released from my fore-finger
stung the bodies of the Dānava anti-gods
like poisonous insects.

29 The wails of the wounded and dying
in the Saubha
could be heard by us;
the wounded fell in the ocean.

30 Some were headless, some armless;
they looked like the headless ghosts
called *kabandhas*;
the Dānava anti-gods screamed and fell.

31 And as they splashed down,
the ocean-creatures devoured them.
I picked up my lotus-lovely,
ocean-obtained, milk-white,

32 Moon-white, silver-white,
kunda-flower-white conch Pāñcajanya,
and blew into it.
The Saubha-lord Śālva

33 Continued battling with me,
using all his powers of māyā.
He hurled on me
a stream of clubs,

34 Javelins, ploughshares, battle-axes,
spears, winged darts,
thunderbolts, nooses, swift pellets,
swords, steel balls, rockets.

35 I was ready for all of tham.
I disintegrated them
with my counter-māyā.
He began hurling hill-missiles.

36 O Bharata descendant! Darkness descended;
and light flashed, alternately.
Now gloomy, now sunny;
suddenly hot, then cold.

37 Flaming coals, embers
and other fire-weapons
were used against me
by my māyā-employing enemy.

38 But I destoyed his māyā
by my māyā;
and harassed him with arrows
at every opportunity.

39 Son of Kuntī, mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira!
The sky glowed with the radiance
of a hundred suns, a hundred moons,
thousands of stars.

40 You could not tell
if it was day or night.
The points of the sky
could not be distinguished.
Bewildered, I strung the Prajñāstra-missile
to my bow.

41 Son of Kuntī,
it sped softly,
like wind-blown cotton.
Light came on again.
I continued
the horripilating battle."

SECTION TWENTY-ONE

1 "Rājā Śālva, my arch-enemy,"
Vāsudeva-Krishna continued,
"harassed by my missiles,
hovered in the sky.

2 Mahārāja! Eager to win
as quickly as possible,
he hurled *śataghnis*,
mahā-clubs, fiery spears,
rods and swords
in my direction.

3 I blocked them all
as they fell
from the sky,
slicing some,
and splintering others.
Turmoil, in the sky!

4 Śālva decided to concentrate his curved arrows
on my charioteer Dāruka,
my chariot
and the horses.

5 Dāruka, attacked, said,
'My duty is to stay, so I stay.
But the arrows of Śālva
are too fierce for me.
I do not think I can last
much longer.'

6 I heard the complaint of my charioteer,
I looked at him,
and saw he had been hit
by arrows.

7 O unexcelled Pāṇḍava!
There was no part of his body –
chest, head, arms –
in which arrows were not sticking.

8 He was drenched in blood.
He looked like a hill
of red soil
after incessant rain.

9 He still held the reins,
but I could see
that Śālva's arrows
had fatally wounded him.
I tried my best, O mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira,
to console him.

10 It was at this time
that a man rushed up to my chariot
and stood by
like a friend.

11 I guesed he was a messenger
from Āhuka-Ugrasena.
His voice was sad and disturbed.
He said:

12 'Dvārakā's heroic chief Ugrasena
sends this message:
Listen, O Keśava-Krishna, to the words
of your father's loved-and-loving friend.

13 *Great, invincible Vṛṣṇi,*
in your absence
Śālva attacked Dvārakā
and killed your father Vasudeva.

14 *Janārdana-Krishna!*
What is the point in fighting here?
Stop fighting; save Dvārakā.
This is your priority now.'

15 His words overwhelmed me
with such grief
that I did not know what I should do
or not do.

16 Brave Yudhiṣṭhira! This terrible news
made me condemn Sātyaki,
Baladeva-Balarāma my elder brother,
and Pradyumna my mahā-chariot-hero son.

17 Before leaving Dvārakā
and proceeding to destroy the Saubha,
I had told them to protect Dvārakā
and my father.

18 *Is the maha-powerful foe-slayer*
Baladeva-Balarāma alive?
Is Sātyaki alive? Is Rukmiṇī's son alive?
I asked myself. *Brave Cārudeṣṇa?*

19 *Is he also alive?*
Are Sāmba
and other tigers-among-men heroes alive?
For if alive,

20 *Even thunder-wielding Indra*
would not have dared harm my father.
If my father,
son of Śūrya, is dead,

21 *It must be that they are dead too –*
Baladeva-Balarāma and others.
I couldn't get this
out of my mind.
Mahārāja! I was distraught with grief
but ready to fight Śālva.

22 And then, O brave mahārāja, suddenly,
I saw the body of my father, Śūra's son,
hurtling down from the Saubha.
I fainted.

23 My father fell like Yayāti
falling headlong
from heaven on earth,
all his holy merits exhausted.

24 My father fell like a lustre-less comet,
his head-dress awry,
his hair dishevelled,
his dress fluttering.

25 My Śārṅga-bow slipped from my hand,
Kuntī's son:
I slumped down in my chariot
in a faint.

26 O Bharata descendant,
my soldiers saw me slumped,
thought I was dead,
and began to moan, 'Hai! Hai!'

27 My father fell with arms and legs
spread-eagled;
my father plummeted down
like a bird.

28 And as he fell,
enemy soldiers on the ground
thrust spears and lances at him.
I shuddered.

29 When I regained my senses,
I couldn't see the soldiers,
the Saubha-chariot, Śālva,
or my old father.

30 *I must have imagined everything,*
I thought. It was all māyā.
Now fully conscious, I resumed fighting,
shooting hundreds of arrows."

SECTION TWENTY-TWO

1 "O finest of Bharatas," continued Krishna,
"with my excellent bow
I sliced the heads of the soldiers
in the Saubha.

2 I fired many snake-shafts at rājā Śālva
from my Śārṅga-bow,
each of them rising in a high arc
and hitting their targets.

3 O excellent Kaurava,
I wasn't able to see the Saubha,
for he had used his māyā again.
I was stupefied.

4 Mahārāja! As I waited,
hordes of vicious-faced Dānava anti-gods
in the Saubha
started roaring fearfully.

5 So I fitted the special sensing missile
that tracks down audible targets
in a mahā-battle
and immediately the roaring stopped.

6 But I fired nonetheless,
and managed to kill all of them,
for my arrows were sun-blinding
and voice-guided.

7 Mahārāja! The roars stopped in one place,
and started in another;
it was easy for me to fire
a second time.

8 The anti-gods kept howling
at all the ten points of the sky,
and I was able
to slaughter them all.

9 Then, suddenly, blurring my eyes,
the everywhere-propelled-at-will Saubha
reappeared,
flying towards Prāgjyotiṣa,

10 And the terrible creatures of destruction,
the Dānava anti-gods,
started hurling a huge shower of boulders
on me.

11 They were bent on killing me.
O Indra-among-rājās,
I must have looked like an ant-hill
crushed by a rain of rocks.

12 The rocks fell so thick and fast
that they covered
my flagged chariot, my horses,
and my charioteer.

13 The great Vṛṣṇi heroes,
unable to see me, panicked:
they fled helter-skelter in all directions.
O lord of the earth!

14 Noticing my precarious state,
the heaven,
the sky, and the earth burst
into cries of 'Hai! Hai!'

15 O rājā! My friends, inconsolably dejected,
moved by the deepest grief,
stood aghast and kept wailing
and lamenting.

16 My enemies were as delighted
as my friends were dismayed.
I got to know of this
after I had won the battle.

17 But I used Indra's favourite weapon –
rock-smashing thunder –
and disintegrated
the congregation of rocks.

18 Mahārāja! My horses were almost
crushed to death
under the tremendous weight of the rocks.
They panted heavily.

19 When my friends saw me emerge,
they rejoiced,
as everyone rejoices
when the cloud-dispersing sun appears.

20 Seeing my horses panting,
almost crushed under the rocks,
my charioteer said to me words
that were right for the occasion:

21 'Descendant of the Vṛṣṇis!
Attack! Attack now!
There he is – Śālva, lord of the Saubha.
Don't let him escape, Krishna!

22 Mahā-muscled Keśava-Krishna!
No time for pity or gentleness now.
Attack him before he knows it –
and kill him.

23 Foe-crushing hero,
an enemy deserves to be killed.
Even a weak enemy should not be spared
by a strong man,

24 Even if he should fall at one's feet –
and as for an aggressive enemy
he should be spared on no account.
O lion among men, proceed

25 With his destruction! O finest Vṛṣṇi,
no more delays!
Don't think of scruples now!
In my opinion,

26 The man who laid Dvārakā waste
can never again be your *sakhā*-friend.'
Son of Kuntī,
when I heard

27 My charioteer say this,
my mind approved;
so I plunged into battle again
in order to kill rājā Śālva.

28 I called out to him: *Wait!*
and selected
my favourite divine fire-missile,
of dazzling radiance,

29 Of incalculable mahā-energy,
incapable of being repulsed,
charged with the power
to slice through anything.

30 Yaksas, rākṣasas, anti-gods,
and rājās of impure races
cannot withstand the impact
of this mahā-weapon.

31 It was my *cakra*, the Kālāntaka weapon
that annihilates everything –
it is razor-sharp,
it is like Yama, the god of death.
I breathed mantras in it
and whispered:

32 *Destroy the Saubha and all in it!*
Then I hurled it
with all the strength I could summon
in my arms.

33 The Sudarśana *cakra* swung
into the sky,
looking like a second blindingly radiant sun
at the end of a yuga.

34 It sliced through the now
unsplendoured Saubha-city
like a saw cutting through
a huge tree.

35 Severed in two by the Sudarśana,
the Saubha fell
like the city of Tripura destroyed
by Maheśvara-Śiva.

36 Slicing the Saubha,
the *cakra* returned to my hand.
I aimed it once again, saying,
'Śālva this time!'

37 Śālva was on the point
of hurling a mace in that mahā-battle
when my *cakra* hit him.
He burst into flames.

38 With brave Śālva killed,
the agitated Dānava anti-gods
fled in confusion,
shouting and wailing 'Hai! Hai!

39 I drove my chariot
to the Saubha-city
and triumphantly blew my conch,
inspiring my allies.

40 When they saw
their Meru-high Saubha-city
with its palaces and gates in blazing ruin,
they fled.

41 With Śālva killed
and the Saubha disintegrated,
I returned to the Ānartas
to the joy of my friends.

42 That is why, O rājā, O slayer of heroes,
I was unable to be in Hastināpura.
Had I come, Sudyodhana-Duryodhana
would not be alive today,

43 And the dice-game
would not have taken place.
Now it's too late. Hard to hold back
a broken dam's water. What can I do?"

44 Śrīmān Madhusūdana-Puruṣottama-Krishna
mahā-muscled hero,
said this, and took Yudhiṣṭhira's permission
to leave.

45 Mahā-armed, heroic Krishna
bid Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira farewell.
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīma
smelt mahā-muscled Krishna's head.

46 Arjuna embraced him;
Nakula and Sahadeva honoured him,
as did Dhaumya.
Draupadī adored him with tears.

47 Having received the Pāṇḍavas' pūjā,
Krishna escorted Subhadrā and Abhimanyu
into the golden chariot,
received everyone's farewell, and climbed in.

48 He consoled Yudhiṣṭhira
and set out for Dvārakā,
on his sun-refulgent,
Śaibya-and-Sugrīva-pulled chariot.

49 After the Dāśārha hero left,
Drupada's son Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna
took Draupadī's sons with him
to the capital.

50 The Cedi rājā Dhṛṣṭaketu
met the Pāṇḍavas
and took his sister, Nakula's wife Kareṇumatī,
with him to his capital Śuktimati.

51 The Kaikeyas took Yudhiṣṭhira's permission,
honoured the Pāṇḍavas
with the deepest reverence,
and left.

52 The Brahmins, Vaiśyas and others
were repeatedly told to go
but they refused
to leave the Pāṇḍavas.

53 O bull-brave Indra-among-rājās Janamejaya!
It was a deeply dedicated group of followers
that remained with the Pāṇḍavas
in the Kāmyaka forest.

54 Yudhiṣṭhira paid his respects
to the mahā-minded Brahmins.
He called his men and said,
"Get the chariots ready."

SECTION TWENTY-THREE

1 With the departure
of Dāśārha-Krishna,
Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna,
the twins, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
and their purohita,
rode in splendid chariots

2 To another forest,
Each looked like Bhūtapati-
Śiva, lord of spirits.
They gifted gold coins,
dresses, and cattle
to Veda-knowing Brahmins.

3 Accompanying them
were twenty bodyguards,
armed with bows,
spears, fire-missiles,
and other weapons
of terrible destruction.

4 Taking her dresses,
ornaments, nurses
and maidservants,
another chariot driven by Indrasena
followed princess Subhadrā
towards Dvārakā.

5 The gentle-hearted citizens
came to Yudhiṣṭhira, finest of Kauravas,
and did *pradakṣiṇa.*
The chief Brahmins
of Kurujāṅgala joyfully
honoured him.

6 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers
acknowledged their greetings.
Seeing such a large
gathering of people
come to Kurujāṅgala,
mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira delayed departure.

7 The mahātmā bull-brave Kaurava
felt for them
as a father for his sons;
And they felt for him
as sons feel
for their father.

8 The swelling crowd
gathered and hemmed
Yudhiṣṭhira in;
with tears of shame, O rājā,
many of them said,
"Hai, lord! Hai, Dharma!"

9 "Our king! The chief of the Kurus!"
they said. "Where are you going,
O Dharmarāja,
leaving us behind,
sons without their father!"

10 Shame on the wicked-minded
son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Shame on evil Śakuni!
Shame on evil Karṇa! –
all wishers of evil
to followers of dharma.

11 Mahātmā Dharmarāja,
you founded incomparable
Śatakratu-Indraprastha,
a city as splendid
as Mahādeva-Śiva's Kailāsa.
Why do you leave us now?

12 Mahātma Dharmarāja,
where are you going,
leaving this incomparable
deva-māyā-built, god-guarded
lovely-like-celestial-
māyā sabhā?"

13 Bībhatsu-Arjuna, knowledgeable
in dharma-artha-kāma,
replied loudly:
"By living in the forest,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
will excel his foes.

14 Led by dharma-and-
artha-learned Brahmins,
go, together or singly,
to the ascetics
and ask them
to pray for our welfare."

15 Hearing these words
of Arjuna, the Brahmins
and all other castes cheerfully
paid their respects
to Yudhiṣṭhira
by doing *pradakṣiṇa.*

16 They bid farewell
to Yudhiṣṭhira,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara Bhīma,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, Yājñasenī-Draupadī,
and the twins,
and sorrowfully went back.

SECTION TWENTY-FOUR

1 After they had all left,
Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
firm-in-truth son of Kuntī,
said to his brothers:

2 "We shall have to spend twelve years
of our life here
in this uninhabited mahā-forest;
select a deer-and-bird-filled spot,

3 With fruits, and flowers,
pleasing to the eyes,
with holy men in it,
so that our years pass happily."

4 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna listened to Yudhiṣṭhira,
his dharmarāja brother,
and paid him reverence
as he would a guru.

5 "You have kept company
with the noblest elders and mahā-ṛṣis,"
Arjuna said.
"You know everything.

6 Bull-brave Bharata,
you have honoured Brahmins
of mahā-tapasyā such as Nārada
and Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa,

7 Who, with disciplined passions,
have travelled
in the regions of the gods, Brahmā,
gandharvas, and apsarās.

8 There cannot be any doubt that you know
the minds of all Brahmins;
you also know
the power of each.

9 You know what is best for us.
Whatever you say,
wherever you wish, maharāja,
we will go.

10 Nearby is lake Dvaitavana,
where holy men congregate,
a paradise of birds,
fruits and flowers.

11 Rājā, if you give us permission,
this is where
we would like to live for twelve years.
I await your advice."

12 "I think your choice is perfect,"
replied Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Pārtha-Arjuna, let us go
to the holy and famous Dvaitavana."

13 The dharma-abiding sons of Pāṇḍu,
followed by countless Brahmins,
came to the holy lake
Dvaitavana.

14 Some of the Brahmins were believers
in fire-worship, others not,
some scholars in the Vedas,
others dependent

15 On alms and forest-subsistence –
hundreds of strict-vowed ṛṣis
and mahātmās of great piety
accompanied Yudhiṣṭhira.

16 They were with Yudhiṣṭhira
and the other Pāṇḍavas,
when the bull-brave Bhārata heroes set foot
in entrancing Dvaita-forest.

17 It was summer:
tamāla-trees, palm-trees,
mango, *madhūka*,
nīpa, kadamba,
sarja, *arjuna*,
and flowering *karṇikāra*;

18 Peacocks, *cātakas*,
cakoras, barhinas
and kokilas perched
on the tallest
tree-trops
and sang sweetly.

19 Rāṣṭrapati Yudhiṣṭhira saw
hill-huge leader elephants,
temples streaming
with rutting juice,
roaming alongside
herds of she-elephants.

20 And beside the river
Bhogavatī-Sarasvatī,
they saw holy men
of remarkable vows
wearing bark-dress,
with matted locks.

21 Rājā Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira descended
from his chariot;
with his brothers
and followers
he entered the forest
like Śakra-Indra entering heaven.

22 Many Cāraṇas and Siddhas,
eager to see him;
approached him;
the forest-dwellers
formed a circle
round the leonine Indra-among-men.

23 Finest of dharma-followers Yudhiṣṭhira greeted them;
they honoured him
like a god;
after this *añjali* offering
to the twice-born,
he entered the forest.

24 The mahātma rājā
garlanded with flowers
like Pāṇḍu in the past,
sat down at the foot
of a huge tree
after he had been honoured.

25 Tired, Bhīma, Kṛṣṇa-Draupadī,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna and the twins,
with their followers,
left the chariots
and seated themselves
around Indra-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira.

26 The massive,
creeper-heavy tree,
with five heroic bowmen
sitting under it –
looked like a mahā-mountain
sheltering five elephants.

SECTION TWENTY-FIVE

1 Used-to-happiness,
now-in-distress,
the five Indra-like
Pāṇḍavas amused themselves
in the śāla forests
of the Sarasvatī.

2 The great Kaurava king
pleased the munis
and other holy men
and the Brahmins
by offering them gifts
of fruits and roots.

3 Their purohita Dhaumya,
like a father,
performed the rituals
honouring acestors' spirits
for the Pāṇḍavas
living in the forest.

4 The immortal ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya,
of celestial lustre,
came as a guest
to the āśrama
of the Pāṇḍavas
exiled in the forest.

5 Mahā-minded bull-brave
Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira
offered pūjā-respect
to the sun-radiant,
god-ṛṣi-and-man worshipped
mahā-muni Mārkaṇḍeya.

6 Seeing Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma,
and Arjuna among
the ascetics, omniscient,
incomparable Mārkaṇḍeya thought
of Rāma, and smiled.

7 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira, puzzled,
asked, "These ascetics
feel sorry for me;
why is it that you,
out of joy, smile
seeing us?

8 "Not out of joy,"
replied Mārkaṇḍeya.
"Nor pity. I am beyond all that.
Tāta, child, your misfortune
reminded me of the misfortune
of rājā Daśaratha's son Rāma.

9 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son, Yudhiṣṭhira,
because his father asked him,
Rāma went into exile;
I saw him long ago,
wandering with his bow
on Ṛṣyamūka hill.

10 Daśaratha's mahātmā son
was like thousand-eyed
Namuci-slaying,
lord-of-Yama Indra;
he dutifully accepted
forest-exile.

11 He was brave like Śakra-Indra,
mahā-minded, invincible;
but he had to give up pleasures
and bear with sorrow.
It's adharma
to be proud of power.

12 Because they used truth to conquer
this sea-surrounded earth,
Nābhāga and Bhagīratha
found heaven.
Tāta, my child, it's adharma
to be proud of power.

13 Firm-in-truth Alarka, king of Kāśī
and Karūṣa, gave up
his kingdom and wealth
and was called a saint.
It's adharma
to be proud of power.

14 Because they offer pūjā
to the Creator's laws
as revealed in the Vedas,
the seven ṛṣis shine in the sky.
It's adharma
to be proud of power.

15 For look, O Indra-among-men,
even the elephants
with hill-huge tusks
abide by the Creator's laws.
It's adharma
to be proud of power.

16 O Indra-among-men, look:
all the world's creatures
conform to the laws
dictated by their natures.
Such is karma. It's adharma
to be proud of power.

17 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
you shine in truth,
in dharma, gentleness,
and modesty; your fame
shines like fire,
shines like the sun.

18 When the sad days
of your exile, O king,
are over,
you will recover
from the Kauravas
your former glory."

19 Saying this,
the mahā-ṛṣi
blessed Dhaumya
and the Pāṇḍavas
and their followers
and proceeded northwards.

SECTION TWENTY-SIX

1 During the period the Pāṇḍavas
stayed in Dvaitavana,
that mahā-forest became
the haunt of Brahmins.

2 With chants from the Vedas
always being heard,
Dvaitavana forest and its lake were sanctified
like Brahmā's realm.

3 The sonorous syllables
of sacred chants, songs, rituals
and prose spoken by Brahmins,
enchanted the place.

4 Brahmin and Kṣatriya duties blended
when Vedic chants of Brahmins mingled
with the twang
of Pāṇḍava bow-strings.

5 One saṁdhyā evening, while Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
was sitting among the ṛṣis,
maharṣi Baka, son of Dalbha,
said to him:

6 "In the forest of Dvaita, O excellent Kaurava,
is now the time of evening *homa.*
Brahmins are lighting
the sacred fires.

7 Under your protection,
the strict-vowed Brahmins
perform their pious dharma.
Bhṛgu, Vasiṣṭha, Kāśyapa, Aṅgiras,

8 Mahā-fortune-favoured Agastya's sons,
the children of Atri –
all the foremost Brahmins of the world
are grateful to you.

9 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
O Kaurava-descendant,
listen with your brothers
carefully to my words.

10 Brahmin-energy united with Kṣatriya-energy,
Kṣatriya with Brahmin,
is like a forest-devouring wind;
it consumes enemies.

11 To win this world
and the next, *tāta*, my child,
one needs a Brahmin's help.
With a dharma-artha-
knowing Brahmin,
a king conquers his foes.

12 King Bali ruled his subjects with dharma,
for which
the best advice he received
came from Brahmins.

13 So Virocana's son,
the anti-god Bali,
got ineshaustible wealth;
but when he began
oppressing Brahmins,
he ruined himself.

14 The plentiful earth
ignores a man
not helped by Brahmins;
the sea-girt earth
gratifies a man
advised by Brahmins.

15 A Kṣatriya without a Brahmin
is like an elephant without a driver:
in a battle
he perishes.

16 The insight of a Brahmin
and the might of a Kṣatriya –
when these unite,
the world is filled with delight.

17 A wind-fanned fire quickly consumes
wood and dry grass;
a Brahmin-assisted rājā
soon wipes out his enemies.

18 A clever man should seek
the advice of Brahmins
to get what he does not have
and increase what he has.

19 So, to increase
what you have,
to get what you don't have,
to act wisely,
consult a wise-in-śruti
and Veda-learned Brahmin.

20 Because you have always cherished
the highest feelings for Brahmins,
the three worlds, Yudhiṣṭhira,
applaud your fame."

21 All the Brahmins accompanying Yudhiṣṭhira
paid their pūjā-respect to Dalbha's son Baka;
they were pleased to hear him
eulogise Yudhiṣṭhira.

22 Dvaipāyana, Nārada, Jāmadagni-Paraśurama,
Pṛthuśravas,
Indradyumna, Bāhluki, Kṛtacetas, Sahasrapāt;

23 Karṇaśravas, Muñja, Lavanāśvas, Kāśyapa,
Hārīta, Sthūlakarṇa, Agniveśya, Śaunaka;

24 Kṛtavak, Suvāk, Brhadāśva, Vibhāvasu,
Urdhvaretas, Vṛṣāmitra, Suhotra, Hotravāhana –

25 These and many other strict vowed Brahmins
honoured Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira,
like ṛṣis
worshipping Purandara-Indra.

SECTION TWENTY-SEVEN

1 One evening (Vaiśampāyana continued),
Pṛthā-Kuntī's exiled sons and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
were sitting and discussing
their misfortune.

2 Lovely and loved, learned and virtuous
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
said the following words
to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira

3 "The malicious, wicked-minded
son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
if you ask me, hasn't the slightest feeling
for us.

4 O rājā! Does that ill-minded man
have any pangs of conscience
seeing me dressed in deerskin
and banished in the forest?

5 That man of wicked-karma's heart must be made
of the hardest steel,
to speak the way he did
before his dharma-following elder brother.

6 And the wicked-atmaned wretch delights
in seeing you,
so used to luxury,
reduced to this pitiable state.

7 When you put on deerskin
and left for the forest,
only four mean men
had no tears in their eyes:

8 Duryodhana and Karṇa,
wicked-ātmaned Śakuni,
and the fierce, vicious brother of theirs,
Duḥśāsana.

9 O noblest of the Kurus,
the eyes of the other Kauravas
were filled
with tears of sorrow.

10 When I see your bed now,
I fee sorry, mahārāja,
knowing you were used to comfort,
and don't deserve this.

11 I think of the gem-encrusted ivory seat
in your sabhā,
and now this kuśa-grass –
and I feel sorry.

12 I used to see you in the sabhā
surrounded by rājās:
now there are none.
And I feel so uneasy, O rājā.

13 I used to see sandalpaste
anointing your sun-bright body;
now it is mud.
O Bharata-descendant! It is unbearable!

14 O Indra-among-rājās!
I used to see you dressed
in the finest silks,
now I see you going about in bark.

15 I used to see wholesome, delicious food
of all kinds
taken from the palace in gold plates
for ditribution to Brahmins.

16 My lord, you were the ideal king,
providing the ascetics,
the houseless and householders
with the choicest food.

17 In your palace you had thousands of plates
loaded with food,
with which you gratified
the Brahmins.

18 Now I see nothing of this, O rājā –
and I can't have peace of mind.
Your younger brothers,
mahārāja, sporting exquisite ear-rings,

19 Were pampered by cooks
with sweet, subtle preparations of all kinds –
now they live
on forest-pickings.

20 How can I bear this pain!
Lord of men,
when you see mighty Bhīma
living like this in the forest,

21 When you see Bhīma suffering,
Bhima who could do all things
all by himself,
don't you feel sorry for him?

22 Doesn't your anger flare up
when you see him,
used to luxurious dresses and chariots,
reduced to this?

23 When you see him like this –
a man who once vowed
to kill the Kauravas –
how can you control your anger?

24 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara Bhīma endures this
because he respects you,
Arjuna has two hands, two eyes,
but his strength

25 Is that of a thousand
because he is expert in arms;
he is like Yama at yuga-end;
defeated by him,

26 Kings came to attend your Rājasūya.
Mahārāja, when you see him,
whom gods and anti-gods
gave to pūja-respect,

27 Suffering as he is now,
are you not agitated, O rājā?
You see Pārtha-Arjuna used to happiness,
not deserving misfortune, and you are not angered,

28 You remain unmoved.
Strange, O Bharata!
This man, who, from his chariot,
vanquished men and serpents –

29 Why does his misfortune leave you cold?
After all, O vanquisher of foes,
he received lavish gifts
of chariots, horses and elephants;

30 He took by force wealth
from many hostile kings;
he can shoot five hundred arrows
with instant swiftness –

31 How can you bear to see him
in exile?
And handsome, fine-limbed,
excellent swordsman

32 Nakula – doesn't his suffering
inflame you?
Yudhiṣṭhira, when you see heroic
handsome Sahadeva, Mādrī's son,

33 In the forest,
how can you forgive his enemies?
O Indra-among-men, Nakula and Sahadeva
don't deserve misfortune,

34 And when you see them suffer,
how can you remain unaffected?
When you see me,
Drupada's, daughter,

35 Daughter-in-law of mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍu,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna's sister,
wife of heroes, how can you pardon
my oppressors?

36 O finest of Bharatas,
you have no spark of feeling in you
if, seeing me and your brothers,
you remain untouched.

37 There is a *smṛti* saying:
'No Kṣatriya
without righteous wrath.'
You must be the exception.

38 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
The Kṣatriya who doesn't show
courageous anger at the right time
is scorned by everyone.

39 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī! Don't try to be too forgiving
with your enemies,
especially when you have the power
to destroy them.

40 Of course, a Kṣatriya who doesn't forgive
when forgiveness is called for,
will find himself unpopular;
he will find himself
doomed in this world,
and in the next."

SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT

1 “In this regard,” continued Draupadī,
“I will narrate the old story
of the conversation
between Prahlāda
and the son of Virocana,
named Bali:

2 One day Balī
went to this grandfather Prahlāda
the mahā-wise, discriminating-in-dharma Indra
of the anti-gods and Daityas.

3 ‘What is better – forgiveness?
or ferocity?
I am confused on this;
tāta, tell me clearly.

4 You know all about dharma,
Tell me exactly –
which is best.
I will follow your advice.’

5 Asked directly,
the wise grandfather,
who knew all about everything,
answered his grandson directly.

6 ‘Understand two things clearly,’
Prahlāda replied.
‘Ferocity is not the ideal;
but neither is forgiveness.

7 The man who’s perpetually forgiving
will find, *tāta,* my child,
servants, enemies and strangers
taking advantage of him.

8 No one will really respect him.
Tāta, my child,
the practice of ceaseless forgiving
is avoided by paṇḍits.

9 Servants will ignore him
and turn to sly ways;
the not-so-clever will lay hands
on his wealth.

10 Servants will busily pilfer
his clothes, ornaments,
dresses, beds, seats, food, drinks,
and other articles.

11 They won't do even the work
normally expected of them.
When ordered to despatch presents,
they will conveniently forget.

12 The pūjā-respect that a master deserves,
he will not receive-
To be insulted by a servant
is a fate worse than death.

13 *Tāta,* my child, sons, servants, attendants,
even strangers
start speaking insolently
to a forever forgiving man.

14 They will even start staring at his wife
lustfully.
A foolish wife too will start doing
whatever takes her fancy.

15 Comfort-seeking servants,
if not immediately punished,
go from bad to worse;
the wicked ones are insufferable.

16 These are just some of the problems
a forgiving man has to face.
But see what happens to the unforgiving man,
O son of Virocana!

17 Say an angry man,
motivated by blind impulse,
starts punishing indiscriminately
the deserving and the undeserving –

18 Very soon he will find himself
without friends;
his own relatives as well as strangers
will start disliking him.

19 By infuriating others,
such a man finds himself soon
without wealth; he breeds enemies,
hatred, disaffection.

20 If a man angrily starts punishing people
without cause,
he will find his kinsmen, his wealth,
even his life deserting him.

21 Just as housedwellers fear a snake,
so people fear the man
who pressures
both ill-wisher and benefactor.

22 How can a man prosper
of whom people are afraid?
On the slightest pretext,
they will find cause to harm him.

23 Don't lose your temper,
but don't be too mild either.
There is a right time
for the display of both.

24 The man who is gentle
at the right time,
and harsh at the right time –
that is the man
who prospers both in this world
and the next.

25 Let me tell you the right times
for forgiveness.
This is the teaching
of the most learned.

26 If a well-wisher does a grave injustice,
forgive him –
after all,
he helped you once.

27 If he harms you through ignorance
or foolishness,
forgive him – after all,
it's difficult to be discriminating.

28 Scoundrels who do wrong knowingly
but plead ignorance
should be punished
even for the smallest offence.

29 First offences should always
be pardoned;
the second, no matter how small,
should be punished.

30 If a man unknowingly commits wrong,
he should be forgiven –
but only
after a thorough enquiry.

31 Gentleness overcomes force,
forgiveness melts weakness;
nothing's greater
than all-accomplishing forgiveness.

32 Know your strength and weakness,
know time and place.
See everything in its context.
Sometimes it may be necessary
to forgive people
out of fear.

33 These are the various times
at which forgiveness is called for –
on other occasions
prefer using physical prowess.'

34 O lord of men! If you ask me,
now is the time to show your strength
to the greedy sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
who oppress others.

35 This is not the time
for forgiving the Kauravas.
The time for showing strength has come.
Show it.

36 The gentle and forgiving are spurned,
the powerful go on exploiting.
A king should know
when to be which with whom."

SECTION TWENTY-NINE

1 Yudhiṣṭhira replied;
"Anger is prosperity's root and adversity's.
Mahā-intelligent lady,
anger devastates people,
and anger raises them
to the highest prosperity.

2 Lovely lady,
he prospers who controls anger;
and he who cannot
suffers agonising misfortune.

3 Anger is everywhere! –
the root of the world's ruin.
How can you expect me to give in
to world-ruining anger?

4 The angry man's most likely to do wrong;
most likely
to kill his guru;
most likely to abuse his elders.

5 The angry man doesn't know
what should be said
and what shouldn't;
there's nothing he cannot say or do.

6 He can kill a man
who doesn't deserve to be killed;
he can deify one
who deserves death;
it's possible that he might even send himself
to Yama's realm.

7 These are some of the reasons
why anger should be suppressed
by anyone wishing to prosper
in this world and the next.

8 Draupadī, I ask myself:
If others can be serene,
why should I lose my head?
So I check my anger.

9 A man who doesn't move
against an angry adversary,
is a double doctor –
he saves himself and his adversary.

10 If a weak and foolish man lets anger
be the basis
of dealing with a strong man,
he invites his own doom.

11 The man who thus dooms himself
has no place in the next life.
It's clear, Draupadī,
that anger should be curbed.

12 The prudent man, though provoked,
will remain cool;
by not showing anger
he rejoices in the next world.

13 That is why it is said
that the wise man, strong or weak,
should forgive his oppressor
even when gravely provoked.

14 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, good men praise
the anger-conquering man.
Good men believe victory always favours
the honest and forgiving.

15 Truth excels untruth,
kindness is better than cruelty.
I will not use anger,
which the good condemn,

16 For the sake of killing Suyodhana-Duryodhana.
Far-seeing paṇḍits
consider him the man
of truly radiant character,

17 One who subdues anger.
The man who resolutely controls
his fast-growing anger,
is respected by the learned

18 As a man with moral strength.
Graceful-hipped lady,
the angry man cannot see himself or others
objectively.

19 I said before that he can kill a man
who doesn't deserve killing –
or kill even his guru.
So, a strong man must shed anger.

20 An angry man will find it very hard
to cultivate
the bravery, skill, dignity, and charity
associated with authority.

21 By giving up anger one can radiate character;
mahā-learned lady,
the anger-dominated man
has no character to radiate.

22 The ignorant think anger is some kind
of mind-force –
anger is really a fierce *rajas*-passion
that destroys the world.

23 If you wish to behave dignifiedly,
give up anger;
better to give up your sva-dharma
than fall victim to anger.

24 Flippant fools might think and do otherwise,
but, faultless lady,
how can you expect me
to follow them?

25 If there were no men on earth
as profoundly patient as the earth,
all order would end,
only endless quarrels remain.

26 If the insulted hit back,
if the rebuked worker rebukes his superior,
life would become impossible;
adharma would flourish.

27 Say, the abused abuse back,
the oppressed begin
oppressing their oppressor,
the punished inflict punishment back –

28 Won't the logical conclusion be
that fathers will start killing sons,
husbands wives,
and wives husbands?

29 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, how can there be peace of mind
in a world like this?
Lovely lady, living together and loving each other
needs such peace.

30 If kings were always angry, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
their subjects would incessantly suffer.
Such royal wrath
can only bring misery.

31 Because there are people who forgive
like the forgiving earth,
life continues, creatures are born,
they grow and prosper.

32 Lovely lady, on matter what the insult,
forgive!
Because we forgive,
the world gets populated.

33 Honoured as truly learned
is the anger-conquering man
who forgives an insulting, oppressing,
stronger man.

34 He obtains the eternal realms.
But the man who nurses anger
is a fool who is ruined here
and in the next world.

35 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, there is a famous song
in praise of those who forgive –
a song which mahātmā,
ever-forgiving Kāśyapa sang:

36 'Forgiveness is Dharma
Forgiveness is Yajña
Forgiveness the Vedas
Forgiveness is Śruti
He who knows this
Will forgive all.

37 Forgiveness is Brahmā
Forgiveness is Truth
Forgiveness is Tapasyā
Forgiveness is Purity
Forgiveness the merits
Earned in the past
Forgiveness the merits
Earned in the future
Forgiveness the root
Of the world's existence.

38 The forgiving reach realms
Higher than those
Who perform yajñas
Higher than those
Who have knowledge
Of Brahman
Higher than those
Who practise tapasyā.

39 Performers of rituals
Laid down in the Vedas
And performers of rituals
Other than Vedic
Attain certain realms –
But those who forgive
Attain the adorable ineffable
Experience of Brahman.

40 Forgiveness
is the strength of the strong
Forgiveness
is the Brahman of tapasyā-followers
Forgiveness
is yajña and peace of mind
Forgiveness
is the truth of the truthful.

41 How can you expect me, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
to forsake forgiveness,
which is the essence of Brahman,
truth, wisdom and the three worlds?

42 However learned the man,
he should learn to forgive.
The all-forgiver is the one
who achieves Brahman.

43 This world belongs to the forgiving;
the other world
belongs to the forgiving.
They are honoured in this world,
they achieve the supreme goal
in the next.

44 Those who control their anger by forgiveness,
attain the highest realms –
there is nothing higher
than forgiveness.'

45 Kāśyapa chanted these lines
to praise the forgiving,
Listen to them; be calm, Draupadī,
forget your anger, be patient.

46 Our grandfather, Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma
is a votary of peace;
so is Krishna, son of Devakī,
a votary of peace.

47 Ācārya Droṇa
and Vidura known as Kṣattā
both love peace.
Kṛpā and Sañjaya want peace.

48 Somadatta, Yuyutsu, Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
our grandfather Vyāsa –
all of them daily
proclaim peace.

49 Rājā Duryodhana will surely listen to them
and return our kingdom to us;
if he does not,
he'll be destroyed.

50 Lovely lady, it is clear
for some time now
that hard times are going to be the lot
of the Bharatas.

51 Suyodhana-Duryodhana
does not deserve the kingdom,
and he has no idea of forgiveness;
I do, so I forgive him.

52 Forgiveness and never-harming-others
are the Eternal Dharma.
The self-controlled have these virtues.
I will follow their example."

SECTION THIRTY

1 Draupadī replied:
"I namaskāra the Creator and Ordaines,
who has confused you so well
that you think differently
from your father and grandfather.

2 A man's karma determines
his place in life;
he cannot escape the consequences
of his karma;
only the utterly stupid aspire for mokṣa
by refraining from karma.

3 In this world no one prospers
by cultivating dharma
and forgiveness and gentleness,
by fearing censure.

4 O Bharata descendant, that is why
this dreadful calamity's overtaken you
and your mahā-powerful brothers
who least deserve it.

5 Then, and now, O Bharata-descendant,
you placed your beloved dharma
above everything else –
above even your own life.

6 Brahmins, elders, the gods –
all of them know
you can sacrifice your kingdom, your life,
for dharma.

7 You'll sacrifice Bhīma and Arjuna,
Mādrī's twin sons,
even me, I think,
but you won't give up dharma.

8 My noble elders taught me
that if a rājā protects dharma,
dharma will protect him.
It hasn't protected you, I can see.

9 O tiger-among-men,
you have followed dharma
with the tenacity of purpose
of a man's shadow tailing him.

10 You have never been impolite
towards equals, inferiors, and superiors;
enormous power
never made you proud.

11 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī, with *svāhās*, *svadhās*
and other forms of pūjā,
you have adored the Brahmins,
gods and *pitṛs*.

12 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī, you have gratified
the Brahmins fully;
mokṣa-seeking ascetics
and householder-ascetics
have been fed – I fed them myself
on golden plates.

13 You have given golden gifts
to forest-dwelling ascetics;
there is nothing you will not gladly
give Brahmins.

14 And after distributing first
to the guests
at your Vaiśvadeva sacrifice, O rājā,
you subsisted on the leftovers.

15 Many were the yajñas daily
performed in your house:
Iṣṭi, *Paśubandha*, *Kāmya*,
Naimitti, and *Pāka*.

16 In this robber-infested, huge,
secluded forest,
deprived of your kingdom, living exiled,
you persevere in dharma.

17 You have also performed mahā-yajñas
requiring profuse *dakṣiṇās:*
the Aśvamedha, the Rājasūya,
the Puṇḍarīka, and the Gosava.

18 O rājā! It must have been
very warped judgement indeed
that made you stake kingdom, wealth, weapons,
brothers – even me!

19 You are honest and gentle,
open-minded, humble, and truthful –
so what made you get addicted
to gambling?

20 I see your decline and your suffering –
and I can't seem
to see or think clearly,
I am so confused.

21 Let me cite from the wisdom
of the past
to show that no man is really free,
all are in the clutches of Destiny-Divinity.

22 The Creator propels all creatures
to joy and sorrow,
pleasant and unpleasant,
on the basis of their past actions.

23 O rājā lord-among-men!
The world's beings
are like wooden puppets
purforming pre-planned gesticulations.

24 And Divinity, O Bharata-descendent,
is like vast *ākāśa*-space
pervading all life, and pushing creatures
into good or evil.

25 And creatures are tied to Divinity
like a bird to a string;
they control neither themselves nor others;
Divinity is the destiny that controls them.

26 Like a threaded pearl,
like a bull roped through his nose,
like a tree fallen
in a flowing river,

27 Creatures follow Divinity;
they are with Divinity
and in Divinity;
they have no existence without Divinity.

28 These ignorant creatures don't even control
their own joy or misery;
propelled by Divinity,
they go to heaven or hell.

29 Like dry grass blown about
by a strong wind,
all creatures, O Bharata-descendant,
are propelled by Divinity.

30 Right actions and wrong actions
are all performed
by all-pervading Divinity,
but who can say, *This is Divinity?*

31 This body is a field
for Divinity's sowing;
in it flourish good-fruited karma
and bad-fruited karma.

32 And look how the deluding māyā
of Divinity operates!
Under māyā's spell,
creatures kill other creatures.

33 Truth-seeing munis see this differently
from others;
the rays of the sun blind some
and give clear vision to others.

34 People see life in fragmentary variety,
everywhere;
actually the Lord is ceaselessly
creating and destroying.

35 Immobile, insensate wood
can be broken with wood,
stone can be cracked with stone,
iron smashed with iron;

36 Similarly, Yudhiṣṭhira,
the Self-Born Pitāmaha-Divinity of all
spreads māyā everywhere,
using creatures to destroy creatures.

37 Like a child first making toys,
then breaking them,
Bhagavān plays with life as a game
of creation and destruction.

38 O rājā! The Creator behaves with creatures
not like a father or mother;
he is angry with them,
and unfriendly like a stranger!

39 When I see good-natured,
mild-mannered noble people in distress,
and the ignoble prospering,
I confess I can not understand it.

40 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
when I see you suffering
and Suyodhana-Duryodhana prospering,
I blame the Creator for the injustice.

41 What pleasure does the Creator get
by making cruel, greedy,
śāstra-flouting and dharma-violating
Duryodhana prosper?

42 If karma clings to its doer,
then it seems to me
that the evil consequences of this
attach also to Divinity.

43 If karma does not cling to its doer,
then naked power
is all that matters here;
and I pity all those who are weak."

SECTION THIRTY-ONE

1 "Yajña-born Yājñasenī-Draupadī," Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"how sweet and clear and persuasive
are your words,
in spite of their cynicism.

2 The point is that I do not act
thinking of the fruits of karma;
Rāja-putrī! Princess! I give when I feel I should give,
do yajña when yajña should be done.

3 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
I do, as best as I can,
the duties of a householder;
action's fruits do not interest me.

4 Graceful-hipped lady, I abide by dharma
not for dharma's fruits.
I learn from men of dharma
and I follow their example.

5 That is the way I am, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī:
I am dharma-prone.
A man who trades in dharma
is rejected by those who know dharma.

6 Rejected also is the calculating doer of good,
who, after doing good,
starts doubting
good's goodness.

7 I have the authority of the Vedas
when I say:
Don't doubt dharma;
to doubt dharma is to be re-born a beast.

8 The moral weakling
who doubts dharma and ṛṣi-wisdom
is prevented from attaining
the realm of bliss and immortality,
just as Śūdras are prevented
from listening to the Vedas.

9 Intelligent lady, royal ṛṣis who know dharma
treat as an elder anyone
who studies the Vedas, follows dharma,
and is high-born.

10 The ill-minded violator of the śāstras,
who doubts dharma,
is considered lower
than Śūdras and robbers.

11 You saw with your own eyes
the *cirañjīvī* ṛṣi of mahā-tapasyā Mārkaṇḍeya,
immortalised by his dharma-devotion,
when he came here.

12 It was devotion to dharma
that made pure-souled ṛṣis
like Vyāsa, Vasiṣṭha, Maitreya, Nārada,
Lomaśa, Śuka and others.

13 You have seen them all,
possessing a yogic radiance
superior to that of the gods
and gifted with power to bless and curse.

14 Blameless lady, these god-like ṛṣis,
who have clear insight into the Vedas,
say dharma
is the first and foremost duty.

15 Fortune-favoured rānī, don't be foolish –
never doubt or mock
the doings of Divinity,
never deride dharma.

16 The man who mocks dharma
and thinks no end
of his own reasoning,
spurns reasoned advice from others;

17 To him ṛṣis who see the future
as already present are lunatics.
The world exists only
for his sensual pleasure.

18 The man who mocks dharma
cannot expiate his crimes:
he is beset with fears here
and in the next world.

19 He must be a real fool who ignores facts,
laughs at the Vedic śāstras,
and lusts and covets.
He goes to hell.

20 But the man who has faith in dharma
and steadfastly follows dharma,
gets everlasting bliss
in the next world.

21 The fool who ignores the proofs
of the reasoning ṛṣis,
who discards dharma and violates the śāstras,
gets bliss in no life.

22 Lovely lady, the man who mocks
the words of the ṛṣis
and other good men – for him neither this
nor the next world exists.

23 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī! Never doubt the wisdom
of the ancient dharma
laid down by all-knowing and all-powerful ṛṣis
and followed by good men.

24 Draupadī, a trader needs a ship
to cross the ocean;
a man needs the raft of dharma
to reach heaven.

25 Blameless lady! If the dharma practised
by men of dharma were fruitless,
endless darkness would long ago
have shrouded this world;

26 None would have found nirvāṇa,
none would have struggled
to acquire knowledge or wealth –
all would have behaved like beasts.

27 If tapasyā, brahmacarya, yajña,
study of the scriptures,
charity and simple living –
if all these were fruitless,

28 Then why should men have persevered
in dharma, Draupadī?
If all these ended only in failure,
there would be utter chaos by now.

29 Why do even the ṛṣis, gods, anti-gods,
gandharvas, rākṣasas,
who are all like Īśvara themselves, all divinities,
cherish the practice of dharma?

30 Because, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, they know
that the Creator gives the fruits of dharma,
so they follow dharma.
Dharma is the eternal supreme refuge.

31 Knowledge brings fruits,
so does tapasyā;
dharma always bears fruit;
so, for that matter, does adharma.

32 Think, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
of the manner of your birth;
remember and think of the way
valiant Dhṛṣṭadyumna was born.

33 Are not these facts convincing enough,
sweet-smiling lady?
The steady-minded, content with little,
serenely accept the fruits of karma.

34 Ignorant fools never seem to be satisfied,
even with more than much;
dharma produces no happiness for them
in the next world.

35 Lovely lady, even the gods don't know
what the Vedas say
are the fruits of good and evil acts;
even the gods don't know
how mysterious karma begins
and how mysterious karma ends.

36 Most humans cannot fathom this mystery either,
most are not aware of it,
and keep revolving in rebirths
for a thousand *kalpas.*

37 The gods keep their secret well:
their māyā is truly profound.
Brahman-devotees who have shed
hope and ambition,
who are serene, whose defects are purified by tapasyā,
they know this secret.

38 Just because you can't see its fruit,
doesn't mean you should start
doubting dharma and the gods.
Selflessly must you do yajña and charity.

39 Karma will bear fruit –
dharma proclaims this clearly.
This is what Brahmā taught his sons,
what ṛṣi Kāśyapa knows.

40 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, think of all this,
and your doubts will dissipate like dew.
Cast off disbelief,
put on faith.

41 Don't mock the Creator
who is lord of all creatures.
Try to know and honour the Lord.
Don't be the way you are now.

42 Don't ignore the Supreme Deity,
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, whose grace helps us mortals,
through our good deeds,
to become immortal."

SECTION THIRTY-TWO

1 "I have never," said Draupadī,
"spoken lightly of dharma.
Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī, why should I ever mock Īśvara,
who is Lord-of-creatures Prajāpati?

2 I have suffered much, O Bharata-descendant,
and this is my protest.
Be so good as to listen to me:
I will protest more.

3 After all, O destroyer of foes,
one is born for karma.
Only the unmoving forms of life exist
without karma, none else.

4 The new-born calf runs to the udder;
the way, Yudhiṣṭhira, human beings act
determines the quality
of their character.

5 O bull brave Bharata!
That's how man differs from other creatures –
his karma can improve his life in this world
and in the next.

6 All creatures, in fact, seek their own good,
O Bharata descendant,
and there is proof enough that they reap
the fruits of their karma.

7 Creatures act for their own good.
The Creator provides for the world,
the crane patiently
waits for fish.

8 Nothing succeeds for the man
who will not act.
For creatures there is only action,
there is no sitting still.

9 So act! Carry karma bravely
as you would armour.
You won't find one man in a thousand
who doesn't value work.

10 Act, to increase your wealth;
act, to make it secure.
Spending without replenishing
will waste even Himālayan riches.

11 Would any creature be living
if karma were to cease?
If karma had no fruits,
would there be people prospering?

12 I see some people working
even when there are no fruits.
Nothing's without action,
life ceases without action.

13 None more despicable
than the believer in fate or chance.
Praise only the man who believes
that karma brings results.

14 The man who smugly believes in fate
and won't act,
wastes away like an unfired clay pot
in water.

15 Short-lived is the weak-willed,
floundering man who,
though capable of work, leaves everything
in the hands of chance.

16 If a man accidentally acquires great wealth,
people consider it the gift of chance
simply because
no one worked for it.

17 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son, providence is responsible
for the good fortune
that a man obtains
by observing religious rituals.

18 The good fortune that comes
from a man's willed actions
is directly reaped fruit.
There is ample proof of that.

19 The wealth that comes to an active man
apparently without any cause,
should be considered, O finest of men,
as natural reward.

20 Accidentally, providentially, naturally –
whichever way wealth arrives,
it is the result really
of pre-birth karma.

21 Īśvara, the Creator,
assessing the qualities of pre-birth karma,
dispenses among human beings its fruits
in this world.

22 Whatever beneficial and harmful deeds
a man does in this world
have reference to the Creator's assessment
of pre-birth karma.

23 This body is the instrument of Divinity;
by itself, it is inert;
inspired by Divinity,
it does what it does.

24 The Supreme Lord Maheśvara
makes all the world's inert creatures
perform their various activities,
O son of Kuntī.

25 But it's man who makes up his mind
to do something; then,
using his intelligence, he does it:
so he alone is the doer.

26 O bull-brave hero! Who can calculate
the total number of actions in this world? –
for these actions have built
vast cities and palaces.

27 We soon learn that oil comes from sesame seed,
curd from milk,
fire from fuel wood –
and we use this knowledge.

28 With various tools and instruments,
we transform this knowledge into action.
Such action
is what keeps creatures alive.

29 A skilful craftsman does his work skilfully;
we can tell an expert
from a novice
by looking at their work.

30 If a man was not responsile
for his acts,
why should he perform religious rites?
Why should a disciple revere a guru?

31 It's precisely because a man is responsible
for his karma
that he is praised when successful,
blamed when not. No other reason.

32 Some call it chance, some call it providence,
and some say it's neither,
it's all the fruit
of human effort.

33 Still others say human effort
is entirely pointless:
it's all invisible fate
and inevitability.

34 Experience seems to show
that success comes sometimes by chance,
sometimes by providence,
sometimes almost by itself.

35 Those who know truth
and speak with the authority of experience
say that there is no fourth way
to success.

36 If the Creator did not so arrange
as to distribute good and bad fruits,
there would not be
a single suffering person.

37 If pre-birth karma had no influence,
then whatever a man decides to do
should unfailingly and always
lead to success.

38 People who do not see these three
as doors to success and failure,
are spiritless types
living only with the body.

39 Manu has only one advice –
A man should act;
the man who does not act
is doomed from the start.

40 It is well known, Yudhiṣṭhira,
that the man who is active and energetic
finds success,
the lazy one fails.

41 O Indra-among-rājās! If action does not succeed,
let him try again, more carefully;
in this way,
he keeps improving himself.

42 The idler who dawdles
is stricken with adversity;
the active worker is soon
on the road to prosperity.

43 No wonder intelligent people
who proceed actively ahead
look down on the hesitating
as doubt-paralysed failures.

44 It so happens that hard times
have overtaken us now,
but if we act with confidence,
they will disappear.

45 Assuming that you are unable to succeed,
at least you,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma, Bībhatsu-Arjuna
and the twins will know why you failed.

46 Others have striven – and succeeded;
so why not us?
Unless one goes ahead and tries,
how is one to know?

47 First one ploughs the soil,
then sows the seeds;
then waits patiently for the clouds
to come and help.

48 If the clouds fail,
why blame the tiller of the soil?
What is there for him but to say,
'I did what others do,

49 And if I fail, it's not my fault.'
And so,
with these words he consoles himself,
and doesn't lose heart.

50 No point in complaining, O Bharata-descendant,
'I work and I fail'.
Work can have only one of two outcomes:
you fail or you succeed.

51 Come success, come failure,
never stop working.
Successful action is the result
of many complex factors.

52 One factor missing,
the success is proportionately reduced,
or completely negated. Without a start,
however, nothing happens at all.

53 Intelligence, power, place, time,
means and auspiciousness –
all combine for the fruition
of one's exertions.

54 The thing is to continue to strive
with all one's powers –
and the greatest of the factors
is sheer hard work.

55 If an intelligent man finds himself
outwitted by his enemy,
let him employ the art of conciliation
and other persuasive means.

56 Yudhiṣṭhira! He should always aim
at the removal of obstacles –
whether they are human,
whether Sindhu river or a mountain.

57 If he engages in co-ordinated probing
of his enemy's weaknesses,
he does a service to himself
and to others.

58 Never underestimate yourself.
The man who understimates himself
is never the man
who achieves success.

59 Descendant of Bharata,
the success of a person
depends upon the time
and the situation.

[III:32:60-62; 33:1-5]

Transcreated by P. Lal

60 O bull-brave Bharata! A long time ago
my father was host to a learned Brahmin,
who taught him all
that I repeat today.

61 My brothers listened to this advice
which came originally
from Bṛhaspati.
I heard it from them.

62 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
I had come to attend to my father
and was sitting in his lap
when I heard these consoling words
from the Brahmin"
(ended Draupadī).

SECTION THIRTY-THREE

1 Bhīma heard what Yājñasenī-Draupadī said
(continued Vaiśampāyana) and,
heaving with anger,
told rājā Yudhiṣṭhira:

2 "King, follow the dharma of a true rājā!
What pleasure do you get
living in this holy forest,
without dharma, kāma and artha?

3 Your kingdom has been taken from you
by Duryodhana
through deceitful dice-play,
not by dharma, bravery, or honesty.

4 He has snatched our kingdom from us
like a filth-eating jackal
stealing leftover prey
from powerful lions.

5 O rājā! Yet you continue to bear such insult,
giving up artha
that brings dharma and kāma,
because you must keep up a show of dharma!

6 Your indifference saw our kingdom
snatched before our very eyes –
a kingdom protected by Gāṇḍiva-wielding Arjuna,
that Śakra-Indra could not take!

7 You are the one responsible!
Our kingdom robbed,
like *bilva*-fruit from an arm-paralysed man,
like cattle from a cripple.

8 O Bharata-descendant!
Because you are firm in pursuing dharma,
we allowed these ignominies to befall us –
to please you.

9 Because you, O bull-brave Bharata,
command us,
we succeed in hurting our friends
and delighting our enemies.

10 It was foolish of us – I regret it now –
that we did not follow your order
and wickedly kill
the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

11 O rājā! Living in the forest like a wild animal –
who else but a weakling
would agree to it?
Brave men would not.

12 Krishna does not approve of it.
Dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu Arjuna does not,
nor does Abhimanyu. The Sṛñjayas don't.
I don't. Mādrī's sons don't.

13 You think only of your word,
you cry, 'Dharma, Dharma'.
What's the matter with you, rājā?
Where's your manliness? Are you a coward?

14 Only cowards, unable to recover their prosperity,
give in to despair.
Despair leads nowhere,
despair destroys the despairer.

15 O rājā! You have talent, you can be far-seeing.
Look, we are heroes!
Your deliberate peace-mongering
will not save you from shame.

16 We think we are forgiving,
but Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons think us weak.
This is more painful
than death on the battlefield.

17 It would be better for us all
to die in a fair battle
than live in exile like this –
for death in battle would bring heaven.

18 And if we become masters of the world
by killing our enemies,
what could be better than that,
O bull-brave Bharata?

19 Isn't this our sva-dharma?
We belong to the warrior-caste,
we seek the highest accomplishments,
we take revenge on enemies.

20 Our kingdom's been stolen from us.
If we declare war,
the world will praise us for it,
not condemn us.

21 O raja! What kind of dharma is it
that hurts oneself and one's friends?
No dharma at all.
The opposite of dharma.

22 Dharma can sometimes debilitate.
Tāta, dear brother, sorrow and pleasure
mean nothing to a dead man,
nor dharma and artha to a weakling.

23 The man who practises dharma
for the sake of dharma suffers.
He is not the wise man.
A blind man cannot see
the light of the sun;
so he cannot see the truth of dharma.

24 The man who thinks wealth
exists for the sake of wealth,
doesn't know the purpose of wealth.
Wealth is in trust,
like cows grazing in a pasture,
in a cowherd's charge.

25 The man who runs after artha
without thinking of dharma and kāma
is like a Brahmin-killer.
He deserves death by one and all.

26 Similarly, the man who chases kāma
without thinking of dharma and artha,
loses friends,
loses dharma and artha.

27 Like a fish in a pond
when the water dries up,
this man, without dharma and artha,
dies when his kāma run out.

28 From wood we get fire.
From the union of dharma and artha
wise men experience
the pleasures of kāma.

29 Artha is rooted in dharma,
and dharma in artha;
each depends on the other,
like clouds and ocean.

30 Kāma is the name we give
to the pleasures of the senses,
therefore artha leads to kāma,
which itself is a bodiless state.

31 O rājā! The man who wants artha
also seeks much dharma;
the kāma-seeker wants artha;
kāma seeks only itself.

32 The pleasure of kāma is its own fruit,
it produces no other.
Wood produces ashes; ashes remain ashes.
The wise know this.

[III:33:33-42]

Transcreated by P. Lal

33 O rājā! Adharma can be likened a fowler
who traps and kills birds –
similarly adharma
traps and kills people.

34 The man who is so blinded
by kāma and greed
that the discards dharma, deserves to be killed by all.
He is the wicked one, in this world and the next.

35 It is clear that you know, O rājā,
what enjoyment can be had
from sources of wealth.
You know their nature and variety.

36 When objects of enjoyment are lost or destroyed,
when they decay and die,
sorrow follows.
That is what has happened to us.

37 The pleasure that comes
from the five senses,
when proper attention is paid
by mind and heart

38 To objects of attachment is, I think,
life's finest fruit.
That is why dharma, artha and kāma
deserve appropriate consideration.

39 Dharma alone will not do,
nor will artha and kāma.
A man should seek to balance all three
in his life.

40 According to the śāstras,
one should pursue kāma in youth,
artha in middle age,
and dharma in old age.

42 Most eloquent of men,
paṇḍits who know the right divisions of time,
balance their time-spans accordingly
between dharma, artha and kāma.

43 O rājā! O Kaurava descendant!
It's important to decide early if one wants
the happiness that comes from pursuing these three
or from renouncing them.

44 Once that is decided, O rājā, act without hesitation –
follow them or renounce them.
To waver
is to be miserably anguished.

45 Good that your conduct always follows
the path of dharma.
Your friends know this
and advise you accordingly.

46 O rājā! The highest dharma now
and in the next world is:
charity, yajña, pūjā-respect for the virtuous,
honesty, and study of the Vedas.

47 But the point, O rājā, O tiger-among-men, is that,
no matter how excellent his other qualities,
a man without wealth
cannot practise this noble ideal.

48 O rājā! Dharma is the root of the universe,
nothing excels dharma.
But dharma is possible, O rājā,
only when much wealth is present.

49 And wealth does not come
by living like a beggar or like a weakling,
O rājā, or by putting one's mind
solely on dharma.

50 O bull-brave hero! In your case,
begging (which is for Brahmins)
is out of the question.
Acquire wealth by hard work and skill.

51 Why should you adopt the life
of a beggar or a Śūdra?
Strength and skill are the special dharma
of a Kṣatriya.

52 Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira, be a Kṣatriya!
With your sva-dharma crush your enemies!
Destroy the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
with my help and Pārtha-Arjuna's.

53 The wise say nobility amounts to dharma.
Be noble, be prosperous!
Too much time
has been wasted already.

54 O Indra-among-rājās! Open your eyes,
and see the Sanātana Dharma.
You are a Kṣatriya. Kṣatriya acts can be cruel
and can cause pain to others.

55 Protect your subjects well
and earn the fruit of their loyalty.
O rājā! Such is Kṣatriyan Sanātana Dharma
ordained by Divinity.

56 Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira, if you neglect to do this,
you will be an object of scorn.
Dereliction of sva-dharma duty
is never praised.

57 Therefore, O Kaurava descendant,
strengthen your will,
abandon weakness, summon courage,
and perform your duty.

58 O rājā! There is not a king in the world
who can acquire power,
prosperity, and respect
by exclusively following dharma.

59 Like a fowler trapping small birds
with tempting bait,
a clever man can win a kingdom
by bribing his enemies.

60 Isn't it true that the anti-gods,
who are the strongly-entrenched
elder brothers of the gods,
were tricked and defeated by the gods?

61 O mahā-muscled ruler of the world,
everything is in the hands of the powerful.
Destroy your enemies
with cunning strategy.

62 None is the equal of Arjuna in bowcraft
in battle.
None equals me when it comes
to wielding the mace.

63 Brave men fight on the strength
of their bravery alone, rājā –
they don't need massive help,
or spy-information. Therefore, fight!

64 Prowess is the root of success;
nothing else.
Useless a tree's shade in winter,
useless a life without prowess.

65 Expend wealth the way
a sower scatters seeds –
to reap a big harvest.
Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira, do not doubt this.

66 But don't invest wealth
if the returns are insufficient –
that's like an ass scratching itself
for momentary satisfaction.

67 A little dharma sacrificed
for a large dharma gained –
that, O Indra-of-men,
is strongly to be recommended.

68 Shrewd men know how to alienate
the friends of their foes.
In this way they weaken their foes
and subjugate them.

69 O rājā! The strong fight on the confidence
of their strength.
They do not resort to slow means
and conciliatory techniques.

70 Sometimes the weak join hands
and crush their enemies
by force of numbers,
like bee-swarms stinging a honey-stealer.

71 Be like the sun, O rājā:
Use your rays
to invigorate creatures and,
if needed, to scorch them.

72 O rājā! The Purāṇas tell us
that the protection of one's kingdom
is a form of tapasyā.
Our forefarthers practised it.

73 O rājā! A Kṣatriya gets heaven not by tapasyā
but by engaging
in a fair battle,
irrespective of victory or defeat.

74 Seeing your pitiable condition,
people have started fearing
that light might desert the sun,
loveliness the moon.

75 I have heard that common folk,
singly and in assemblies,
discuss among themselves by praising you
and blaming the other.

76 As for the Brahmins and the Kauravas –
whenever they gather, O rājā,
they have the highest praise
for your devotion to truth.

77 They say that you haven't once,
from delusion, meanness,
greed, fear, or desire for wealth and fame,
spoken an untruth.

78 Whatever crimes a rājā commits
in acquiring territories
are all expiated by performing
huge *dakṣīṇā*-giving yajñas.

79 Like the moon appearing from behind clouds,
a king shines clear of his crimes
by granting thousands of villages and cattle
to Brahmins.

80 Yudhiṣṭhira, Kaurava descendant,
all the citizens and all the inhabitants,
young and old,
praise you unreservedly.

81 'Like milk in a pigskin bag,
like the Vedas in a rascal,
truth in a robber, and savagery in woman,
is kingship in Duryodhana.'

82 That's what the people say.
O Bharata descendant,
even women and children repeat those words,
like a moral lesson.

83 Crusher of foes, you have fallen
into this pitiful state along with us.
We all suffer
this common calamity.

84 Climb into your chariot, O king!
Have the Brahmins bless its weapons of war,
and march immediately
on Hastināpura,

85 And bestow on them the fruits
of your great victory!
Surrounded by your brothers,
great bow-wielders, and other heroes,

86 All as venomous as snakes,
move forward,
like Vṛtra-slaying Indra surrounded by Maruts.
Annihilate your enemies,
as Indra did the anti-gods.
Seize from Duryodhana his riches.

87 No human can repulse
the vulture-feathered, snake-venom-tipped arrows
that are shot
from the Gāṇḍīva-bow.

88 No warrior, no elephant, no horse
can survive the force of my mace
when I launch furiously
into battle.

89 Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira, why should we refrain
from recovering our kingdom in battle,
with the help of the Sṛñjayas, Kaikeyas,
and the bull-brave Vṛṣṇi-chief Krishna?

90 And what is there to prevent us
from regaining control of the earth
from our enemy?
O rājā! Let our vast army march!"

SECTION THIRTY-FOUR

1 Truth-devoted, without-an-enemy,
mahā-minded Yudhiṣṭhira
listened to Bhīma,
reflected briefly,
controlled his feelings,
and said:

2 "What you say is true.
I don't blame you
for your arrowy words.
It is my wrong choice
that is responsible
for our great distress.

3 I agreed to the dice-game
thinking I could recover
my kingdom from Duryodhana.
That is how Subala's son Śakuni,
on Suyodhana-Duryodhana's behalf,
came to play with me.

4 Śakuni of the hills
is skilled in mahā-māyā.
In the open sabhā,
he tricked and defeated me
who am a novice.
Hence all this suffering.

5 I could have stopped
when I saw the dice
falling odds and evens
obedient to Śakuni.
But I was obsessed,
I had lost my will.

6 Pride and prowess
and passion overrule
the power of the mind.
For which reason, *tāta*, dear Bhīma,
I do not blame you.
It had to happen.

7 When Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son,
seeking our kingdom,
reduced us to misery,
and we become slaves,
it was Draupadī
who came and saved us.

8 And when we returned
to the sabhā
for the second dice-game,
you and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna heard
what Duryodhana said
to all of us.

9 'Prince without-a-foe,
twelve years with your brothers
in exile – if you lose –
in a forest of your choice;
the thirteenth year
to be spent in disguise.

10 If in that year
spies should discover you,
twelve years again,
with the thirteenth in disguise.
Consider this carefully,
before you begin playing.

11 I pledge you my word,
in this sabhā of the Kurus,
that if the thirteenth year
is spent undiscovered,
this five-rivered kingdom
will be restored to you.

12 If it so happens
that we should lose to you,
the same rules apply.'
He said this in front
of the Kauravas in the sabhā.
And I said, 'Agreed.'

13 The dice-game began,
we lost and were exiled.
That hateful dice-game!
We wander through forests,
enduring great hardships,
as a result of that.

14 Suyodhana-Duryodhana, not satisfied,
bereft of his senses,
encouraged the Kauravas
and all his followers
to gloat triumphantly
at our humiliation.

15 I agreed to the rules
in the open sabhā
of good and noble men.
How can I break my word
for the sake of a paltry
pleasure-giving kingdom?
To a man of his word,
death would be better
than ruling such a kingdom.

16 You were the one
who threatened to burn
my hand in the dice-game.
Arjuna stopped you,
and you merely stroked the mace.
If only you had done it then!

17 You speak so nobly now.
What stopped you, Bhīma,
from not agreeing then?
The word has been given.
What is the use now
of speaking so harshly?

18 My greatest shame, Bhīma,
was my helplessness.
Yājñasenī-Draupadī was insulted.
Bhīma, my heart burns
as if I had drunk
some fierce poison.

19 But I gave my word
before the sabhā of the Kurus,
and I will not break it.
I will wait patiently
for better days,
like a sower for the harvest.

20 When an aggrieved person
bides his time
and strikes back only
after his enemy's plans
have flowered and fruited,
that hero earns high praise.

21 Such a man prospers.
His enemies respect him.
He gains many friends.
They gather round him
like the gods round Indra,
seeking his blessing.

22 Listen to me!
I will keep my word.
I cherish dharma
above life itself. Kingdoms,
sons, fame, wealth are less
than a sixteenth part of Truth."

SECTION THIRTY-FIVE

1 "You are mortal," said Bhīma,
"fragile as froth,
short-lived like fruit, slave of Kāla.
How can you take seriously

2 A promise made in Kāla?
Mahārāja, Kāla is endless, immeasurable,
arrow-swift, fluent-flowing,
all-consuming like death.

3 Wait? – But your life
gets shortened every second,
like collyrium powder
used up by an eyestick.

4 Only the immortal man,
or the man who knows exactly
how long he will live,
or the man who sees the future
detailed clearly ahead of him,
can afford to wait.

5 If we have to wait
for thirteen years, O rājā,
we will be thirteen years
closer to death.

6 Wealth is something
only solid flesh can enjoy.
So let's get our kingdom back
before death overtakes us.

7 The man who cannot humble his enemies,
is useless.
he bears his burden like a beast,
and dies in shame.

8 The man who cannot summon up
strength and courage to defeat his enemies –
is a man of low birth –
better that he had not been born.

9 You have generous, golden hands,
your fame straddles the world.
Kill your enemies,
enjoy the fruits of your prowess.

10 Great foe-crusher, rājā,
if a man goes to hell
the day he kills a deceitful foe,
that hell for him becomes heaven.

11 The agony of suppressing one's anger
is more scorching than fire.
It burns me,
I can't sleep day and night.

12 There's none like dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna in pulling the bow-string,
yet he sulks over his grievance
like a lion cowering in a cave.

13 He could kill all the world's bowmen
singlehanded;
but he suppresses his anger
like a giant elephant.

14 Nakula, Sahadeva,
and Kuntī, elderly mother of heroes,
all sit like dumb spectators,
simply to please you.

15 All our friends, including the Sṛñjayas,
are out to please you.
Only I, and Prativindhya's mother Draupadī,
protest.

16 Whatever I say is agreeable
to their ears,
because though they have been reduced to misery,
they are ready for battle.

17 What greater shame could there be
than that our kingdom
should be snatched from us
and enjoyed by weak and hateful foes?

18 Foe-crushing rājā! It must be a special gentleness
that makes you ashamed
to break your word.
The trouble is, no one praises you for it.

19 Rājā, you cannot see the truth;
you are like an ignorant, high-born man
who memorises the Vedas
without understanding them.

20 You are gentle like a Brahmin.
What made you a Kṣatriya?
Kṣatriyas are known generally
for their pitiless minds.

21 You scarcely know what Manu says
is a rājā's dharma.
It involves cunning and deceit –
it is the opposite

22 Of gentleness and virtue.
Mahārāja,
why don't you do what a Kṣatriya
is supposed to do?

23 Why are you silent?
The way you try
to hide yourself
is like taking a handful of straw

24 In order to cover the hills
of the Himālayas.
Can the sun, O Yudhiṣṭhira,
hide in the sky?

25 Can a huge *śāla*-tree
filled with leaves and flowers
near a lake remain hidden?
Can Airāvata,

26 Indra's elephant? Can Jiṣṇu-Arjuna
live without revealing his identity?
Can Mādrī's lion-like twins
hide themselves?

27 Impossible for Nakula and Sahadeva
to remain undiscovered!
Impossible for the famed-for-purity
princess Draupadī too!

28 How do you expect Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
to remain undiscovered?
As for me, people know me
from my childhood, O rājā –

29 I don't see
how I will be able to hide myself –
it's like hiding Meru!
Also, we defeated many rājās and princes,

30 Who will now accept the lordship
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
We dispossessed them –
you cannot expect them to be friendly to us.

31 They will try to harm us
by doing good to Duryodhana –
they will set spies on us –
terrible if they discover us!

32 We have already passed thirteen months
in the forest.
To me they seem
like the full thirteen years.

33 The wise say that a month
is as good as a year,
just as a *pūtikā* is a substitute
for the soma plant.

34 Rājā, you can expiate the crime
of breaking your word
by feeding a splendid
full-load-carrying bull.

35 So make up your mind, rājā,
to fight and kill your enemies.
Fighting's the highest dharma
for a Kṣatriya."

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SECTION THIRTY-SIX

1 Foe-crushing Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Kuntī,
  tiger-among-men,
heard Bhīma, sighed, and kept silent
  (continued Vaiśampāyana)

2 *He tells me the dharma of a rājā,*
  the duties of castes.
But only that man sees clearly
  who sees into present and future.

3 *I know what true dharma is,*
  which is so difficult to know;
I will not diminish the Meru of dharma
  to suit my convenience.

4 These were his thoughts
  before he made up his mind.
Having decided,
  he interrupted Bhīma and said:

5 "Descendant of Bharata, mahā-muscled hero,
  what you say is true.
Excellent speaker,
  listen now to me.

6 O Bhīma, Bharata-descendant,
  any mahā-criminal karma a man performs
on the basis of his physical strength
  can bring only misery.

7 O mahā-muscled one! Deeds should be done
  after careful planning and purpose –
such deeds succeed.
  The gods favour them.

8 Let me explain to you about what you think
  needs to be done immediately
by physical force
  and ill-thought agitation.

9 Bhūriśravas, Śala, brave Jarasaṁdha,
Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa, Droṇa's valiant son
  Aśvatthāman,

10 The powerful sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra –
Duryodhana and others –
are all excellent in war-skills
and ready for battle.

11 The rājās who have been humbled
by us previously
have joined the Kauravas,
and are friendly to them.

12 Their intentions are to help Duryodhana,
not us, O Bharata-descendant.
Their treasuries are full,
their armies large and eager for battle.

13 The officers of the Kaurava army,
their sons and relatives,
have all received wealth-gifts from Duryodhana,
according to rank.

14 Duryodhana has showered such honours
on these heroes
that I am convinced
they will give their lives for him in battle.

15 Mahā-muscled hero,
it is true that Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
and mahātmā Kṛpa try to keep
an impartial attitude,

16 But I am certain they too
will give their lives if necessary
as a return
for the royal favours they have received.

17 All of them have divine weapons,
all are devoted to dharma.
I have a feeling even Vāsāva-Indra and the gods
cannot defeat them.

18 Karṇa, for instance, that mahā-chariot-hero,
is adventurous,
is reckless, invincible, armour-skinned,
expert in all weapons.

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19 Unless these excellent heroes
are first routed in battle,
you cannot think
of eliminating Duryodhana.

20 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara Bhīma, when I think
of the dexterity of the Sūta's son Karṇa,
that super-eminent bowman,
I can't sleep."

21 These words (Vaiśampāyana continued)
made impulsive Bhīma
thoughtful and worried;
he listened, but did not say a word.

22 While the Pāṇḍavas were discussing
these matters,
there arrived among them the mahāyogī Vyāsa,
Satyavatī's son.

23 The Pāṇḍavas offered him
the customary pūjā-respect.
Finest-among-speakers Vyāsa
then said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

24 "Bull-brave mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira,
I divined what you were thinking,
and I hurried here in order
to speak to you.

25 O Bharata descendant! Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
Duryodhana and his brothers, and Duḥśāsana –

26 How to defeat them
and how to remove the fear in your mind
is what I will tell you,
O foe-slayer.

27 Listen carefully to me, O Indra-among-kings,
and act with strength of will.
Dispel your qualms,
and do it!"

28 Parāśara's son Vyāsa took Yudhiṣṭhira aside
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and said to him these words
of profound meaning:

29 "O finest of the Bharatas! The time is ripe
for Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
to proceed with the elimination
of his enemies.

30 I offer you the knowledge
called *pratismṛti*,
which leads to success.
Take it. I give it to you now.

31 With it, mahā-muscled Arjuna will succeed
in fulfilling his desires.
First, send him to get the weapons
of Mahendra-Indra, Rudra-Śiva,

32 Varuṇa, Kubera, and Dharmarāja-Yama.
Arjuna's tapasyā and śakti are such
that he can dare the gods
face to face.

33 He is like a mahā-radiant ṛṣi.
He is Nārayāṇa's friend.
He is eternal, undecaying,
invincible and successful.

34 With the weapons maha-muscled Arjuna acquires
from Indra, Rudra-Śiva,
and the Lokapāla-guardians of the world,
he will achieve great feats.

35 Kuntī's son, Yudhiṣṭhira, ruler of the world,
plan on leaving this forest
and going to another
more convenient.

36 It is never pleasant to be exiled too long
in one place.
Besides, your presence will hinder the tapasyā
of the forest ṛṣis.

37 You support countless Veda-learned Brahmins.
If you stay too long,
the deer of this forest will disappear –
and plant life as well."

38 Having listened to the lord of wisdom,
Satyavatī's son Bhagavan Yogī Vyāsa
who knew secret lore
and imparted it

39 To willing Dharma-rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
Kuntī's son
decided to purify himself.
Vyāsa took his permission and left.

40 Wise Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira memorised
the secret wisdom with great care,
and repeated it
at the proper times.

41 Inspired by Vyāsa's advice,
he left the Dvaitavana forest
and went to the Kāmyaka
on the Sarasvatī's banks.

42 Maharāja Janamejaya! Tapasyā-rich Brahmins
expert in orthoepy and orthography,
followed Yudhiṣṭhira,
like ṛṣis following Devendra-Indra.

43 Reaching Kāmyaka, O bull-brave Bharata,
the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas
camped there with all their friends
and well-wishers.

44 O rājā Janamejaya! They lived there for some time,
these clear-minded heroes,
spending their days practising bowcraft
and listening to the Vedas.

45 Daily they entered the forest
to hunt deer with non-poisoned arrows.
They honoured the *pitṛs*,
the gods, and Brahmins.

SECTION THIRTY-SEVEN

1 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
remembered Vyasa's words,
and decided, O bull-brave Janamejaya,

2 To call Arjuna
for a private meeting;
he took that enormously
learned brother's hand,

3 And, reflecting on their forest exile
for a moment,
foe-crushing Yudhiṣṭhira smiled
and said:

4 "O Bharata descendant,
the fourfold science of warfare
can be seen in Bhīṣma, Kṛpa,
Karṇa and Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.

5 They know all about Brāhma-,
celestial, and human weapons;
they know how to shoot them
and how to repulse them.

6 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana takes special pains
to honour and please them,
behaving towards them
as one should with a guru.

7 He is supremely considerate to all his warriors,
and the result is
that these ācāryas, honoured and pleased,
are devoted to him.

8 They will perform for him
to their best abilities.
It seems the whole world
is under his control –

9 Villages, cities, seas, forests, mines.
For which reason,
Pārtha-Arjuna, you have a special responsibility,
because we love you.

10 O foe-crusher! Let me explain to you
what you can do now.
Tāta, dear brother, Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa
has given me an Upaniṣad.

11 If you were to use this power,
tāta, dear brother,
you would have the world in your hands.
Receive this Brahma-knowledge,

12 And obtain the grace of the gods!
Bull-brave Bharata,
devote yourself
to the severe discipline of tapasyā.

13 Holding your bow and sword,
put on armour,
and practise self-mortification
and severe vow-firmness.
Tāta, dear brother! Do not deviate from your purpose,
go steadfastly north.

14 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna! Indra has with him
all the divine weapons.
Afraid of Vṛtra, the gods once surrendered
all their śakti to Śakra-Indra.

15 All the divine weapons
are in one place!
Go to Śakra-Indra –
he will surely give you all the weapons.

16 Prepare yourself today, and go to Puraṁdara-Indra."
Saying this,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
passed on the knowledge to Arjuna.

17 After the knowledge was communicated
with the proper rituals
to his speech-, body-, and mind-controlled brother,
he ordered Arjuna to go.

18 Commanded by Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
to go to Puraṁdara-Indra, Arjuna picked up
his Gāṇḍīva-of-the-exhaustless-quiver,
and, dressed in armour,

19 With foot-guards and lizard-skin finger-protectors,
offered oblations in the sacred fire,
received Brahmins' blessings,
and gifted them gold coins.

20 Mahā-muscled Arjuna,
carrying his bow and arrows,
looked up and sighed,
knowing the doom awaiting Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

21 When they saw Kuntī's son Arjuna
armed with bow and arrows, about to leave,
Brahmins, Siddhas,
and invisible spirits said:

22 "Kuntī's son, may you achieve soon
what you desire!"
Giving him their blessings,
the Brahmins said:

23 "Kuntī's son, be firm-minded
in your mission,
and you will succeed."
To *śāla*-thighed Arjuna, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī said:

24 "Mahā-muscled Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
may Kuntī's hopes at your birth,
and your hopes –
all that you ever wanted –

25 Now bear fruit. O son of Kuntī,
may none of us again be born Kṣatriyas."
Her words
touched the hearts of all.

26 "I offer my reverence
to the mendicant Brahmins!
My only grief is this –
that the scoundrel Suyodhana-Duryodhana,

27 In the presence of all the rājās,
mocked me, called me a cow!
Not only that – there were so many other insults
he hurled

[III:37:28-35]

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28 At me. And yet, if I were to be asked,
the grief of your going is greater
than the pain
of his insults.

29 When you are gone,
your brothers will speak all the time
of your heroic deeds.
O hero, Pārtha-Arjuna, with you gone,

30 Luxury will become tasteless,
pleasures give no joy.
Such a long time!
Life will become sheer misery.

31 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son, our happiness and sorrow,
our life and death,
our kingdom and success, depend on you.
Go, descendant of Bharata,
I give you my blessing,
May you succeed, Kuntī's son.

32 Faultless one, mahā-powerful one,
you will succeed even against
the fiercest enemies.
Go, go quickly: may nothing harm you.

33 I namaskāra Dhātā and Vidhātā!
May they bless you!
O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, may Hrī, Śrī,
Kīrtī, Dyuti, Puṣṭi,
Umā, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī
protect you as you go.

34 You have always obeyed your elder brother
and followed his orders.
I bow to the Vasus,
Rudras, Ādityas, Maruts,

35 Viśvadevas, and Siddhas –
may they all protect you! *Svastī te-astu*!
O bull brave Bharata! May no harm came to you
from the path-obstructing spirits

36 Of sky, earth, and heaven, or any others."
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī spoke these blessings
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
for Arjuna.

37 Arjuna, mahā-muscled Pāṇḍava,
did *pradakṣiṇa* before Dhaumya
and his brothers,
picked up his magnificent bow, and left.

38 All creatures made way
for the tremendously powerful
and brilliant hero
whose mission was to meet Indra.

39 That great foe-destroyer
crossed many mountain ranges
where ascetics dwelt,
and came to the sacred Himālayas.

40 It took him only a day
to reach the sacred peak,
for, like a great ascetic,
he possessed yogic wind-swiftness.

41 Beyond the Himālayas
and Gandhamādana
and other difficult-to-traverse areas,
travelling day and night,

42 He came to Indrakila mountain
where, even as he paused,
he heard a voice from the sky
shout "Stop!"

43 Pāṇḍava Arjuna heard, looked around him;
Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
saw an ascetic sitting
at the foot of a tree.

44 He shone with a Brahma-radiance.
His skin was reddish,
he had matted locks, he looked emaciated.
That man of mahā-tapasyā said to Arjuna:

45 "*Tāta*, child, who are you,
coming here with bow and arrow,
clad in armour, with a sword,
like a follower of Kṣatriya dharma?

46 You do not need weapons here.
Only serene Brahmin ascetics live here,
and they feel
neither joy nor anger.

47 *Tāta*, child, you do not need the bow here.
No one fights here.
Throw away your bow.
You have achieved life's supreme goal.

48 There is no one like you
in bravery and enterprise."
The Brahmin smiled as he said this,
but Arjuna remained unmoved.

49 So the Brahmin, pleased with him,
again said, smiling:
"Foe-slayer, I bless you. I am Śakra-Indra.
What boon do you want?"

50 Finest of the Kauravas, heroic Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
bowed his head, did *añjali*
and *praṇāma-ed* the thousand-eyed deity,
and said:

51 "*Bhagavan*, revered one, all I ask is –
it is my only wish –
teach me the use
of all the weapons of war."

52 Mahendra-Indra, pleased, smiled and said,
"Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
why do you need weapons here?
This is a place where

53 You have reached life's ultimate of achievement.
Ask for the penultimate bliss."
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
said to thousand-eyed Indra:

54 "Lord of heaven! I don't seek bliss,
I don't want pleasure,
I don't want heaven –
I don't want the joys of the gods.

55 I have left my brothers behind me
in the forest,
I have not yet defeated my enemies –
I will get only everlasting shame."

56 Vṛtra-slaying, all-world-worshipped Indra
consoled Arjuna
with these soothing words spoken
to Pāṇḍu's son:

57 "*Tāta*, child, when you meet three-eyed Śiva,
the wielder of the trident
and lord of the worlds, face to face,
I will give you my weapons.

58 Seek a meeting with the greatest of the gods;
only when you meet him
will your mission in heaven
be accomplished."

59 Śakra-Indra said this to Phālguna-Arjuna
and disappeared.
Arjuna stayed at that spot,
practising rigid yoga.

SECTION THIRTY-EIGHT

1 "Illustrious one," said Janamejaya,
"tell me in detail
how Pārtha-Arjuna was able to get
the weapons he wanted.

2 How was that tiger-among-men,
long-armed, full-of-prowess
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna able to enter
the forest without fear?

3 And what did he do
when he began living there?
O Veda-learned one, how did he please
Bhagavān Sthāṇu-Śiva and Devarāja-Indra?

4 Best of Brahmins,
I would like to know all this from you,
for you know everything
about men and gods.

5 O Brahmin,
the battle that took place
between never-before-defeated Arjuna
and mighty Śiva

6 Has been described as without a parallel,
a truly horripilatory event.
When Pṛthā-Kuntī's lion-like sons heard of it,
they trembled,

7 Realising their own inadequacy;
wonder and fear shook them.
Tell me in detail everything
that Pṛtha-Arjuna did.

8 Nothing that Jiṣṇu-Arjuna does –
no matter how trivial –
can be considered ignorable.
Tell me the whole story."

9 *Tāta*, child, lion-of-the-Pauravas, Janamejaya
(said Vaiśampāyana),
I will tell you this wondrous, divine,
second-to-none story of mahā-ātmaned Arjuna.

10 Listen to me
while I give the details
of Pārtha-Arjuna's body-encounter
with the three-eyed god-of-gods.

11 Instructed by Yudhiṣṭhira,
the brave hero set out
to meet the chief god Indra
and the god-of-gods Śaṁkara-Śiva.

12 With his wonderful bow
and golden-hilted sword,
intent on accomplishing his mission,
mahā-powerful, mahā-muscled Arjuna,

13 The Kaurava descendant,
moved north to the peaks of the Himālayas.
Steady-minded Arjuna, Indra's son, O rājā Janamejaya,
the world's greatest mahā-chariot-hero,

14 Committed himself to a single goal,
and devoted himself to tapasyā.
He entered the fearful
and thorn-filled forest alone.

15 Flowers, friuts;
all species of birds and animals;
also, there were Siddhas and Cāraṇas
dwelling in it.

16 When Kuntī's son Arjuna entered
that forest where no humans lived,
suddenly conches and drums from heaven
sounded.

17 A great shower of flowers
fell on the ground;
clouds appeared,
shading every part of the forest.

18 He took the forest-paths
along the foothills of the Himālayas,
and he shone by himself
on the breasts of a mahā-mountain.

19 Trees bloomed in brilliant green,
birds chirruped sweetly;
the rivers had swirling currents
the colour of lapis lazuli,

20 And echoed with the calls
of *haṁsa*, duck, and crane;
on their banks sang kokilas,
peacocks and *krauñca*-birds.

21 Arjuna saw the sacred, cool, delicious waters,
the lovely river-banks;
and the heart of the great chariot-warrior
was charmed.

22 Mahā-minded, enormously-energetic Arjuna
decided to spend
his time in the forest
practising tapasyā.

23 He wore grass-dress and deer-skin;
he carried a stick;
he subsisted on the dry leaves
that fell on the ground.

24 The first month he subsisted on fruits,
eating every third night;
the second month,
he ate every sixth night;

25 The third month, every fortnight.
And when the fourth month arrived,
the great hero
of the Bharata race,

26 Pāṇḍu's mahā-muscled son,
subsisted on air,
his hands upraised, leaning on nothing,
standing tip-toe.

27 Because he bathed often,
the hair of mahā-ātmaned Arjuna
shone like lightning,
like a glossy lotus.

28 All the maharṣis went
to the trident-wielding deity Pinākin-Śiva
and informed him that Pṛthā-Kuntī's son
was absorbed in mahā-tapasyā.

29 They *praṇāma-ed* Mahādeva-Siva,
and told him about Pārtha-Arjuna:
"Mahā-radiant Pārtha-Arjuna
is practising tapasyā in the heart

30 Of the Himālayas. The tapasyā-heated earth
produces smoke as a result.
We do not know, O god-of-gods, Deveśa,
why be is absorbed in this tapasyā.

31 It irritates us. Illustrious one, stop him."
Śiva listened
to the complaint
of the great self-controlled munis.

32 Then the husband of Umā,
the lord of all beings spoke:
"Do not let any action
of Phālguna-Arjuna's cause you anxiety.

33 Return cheerfully and quickly
to where you came from.
I know why Arjuna is so determined
in his will-power.

34 He does not seek heaven, prosperity,
or long life.
As for what he wants,
I will go today and see to it."

35 The truth-speaking ṛṣis heard Śarva-Śiva
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and, relieved,
returned to their dwellings.

SECTION THIRTY-NINE

1 After the mahātmā ascetics
had left,
trident-wielding Bhagavān-Śiva,
Hara-Śiva, the remover of all ill-deeds,

2 Assumed the form of a hunter
of the Kirāta tribe.
He shone like a golden tree,
he was like a second Meru;

3 He picked up a magnificent bow
and fatally poisonous snake-arrows,
and rushed out
like a ball of fire.

4 The god was accompanied by Umā,
dressed also in Kirāta costume;
mischievous spirits of all shapes,
in different dresses,

5 Together with thousands of female ghosts,
accompanied them.
O Bharata Janamejaya,
the entire area radiated an eerie beauty.

6 Suddenly, everywhere in the forest,
there was total silence.
The sounds of birds, of brooks,
of waterfalls, ceased.

7 Śiva approached Pārtha-Arjuna
of unrivalled accomplishment.
He saw the son of an anti-god –
the awe-inspiring Dānava Mūka –

8 In the guise of a boar
about to kill Arjuna.
Phalguna-Arjuna also noticed the boar
about to charge at him,

9 Picked up his Gāṇḍīva-bow
and his quiver of fierce snake-arrows and,
twanging it loudly,
he said to the boar:

10 "I have come here,
but not with intent to harm you.
But since you seek to kill me,
I'll send you to Yama's abode."

11 Saṅkara-Śiva, disguised as a Kirāta,
saw the strong bow-wielder
Phālguna-Arjuna about to kill the boar,
and ordered him to stop.

12 "I aimed first
at this *indrakīla*-coloured boar."
But Phālguna-Arjuna did not listen,
he fired at the boar.

13 Simultaneously the mahā-radiant Kairāta
shot an arrow
that sped like dazzling fire
or like a thunderbolt.

14 The two arrows,
simultaneously shot by the two men,
struck Mūka's huge, stone-like body
simultaneously.

15 The two arrows thudded into the boar
with a roaring noise,
like lightning falling,
or thunder rending a mountain.

16 Hit by the two fire-mouthed arrows
resembling fierce snakes,
Mūka collapsed,
after reverting to his fearful rākṣasa-form.

17 Foe-slaying Jiṣṇu-Arjuna saw standing
in front of him
a flaming golden man,
with many female followers.

18 Kuntī's son Arjuna smiled and said,
"Who are you,
wandering in this lonely forest,
surrounded by a host of women?

19 Stranger with a golden radiance,
don't you fear this eerie forest?
Why did you shoot the boar
I aimed at first?

20 This rākṣasa came here
either purposely to kill me
or to pass his time – in any case,
I aimed at him first,
you had no right to shoot him;
I will have to kill you.

21 It is against hunting-dharma
to do what you did.
Therefore, dweller of the hills,
be ready to part with your life."

22 The Kirāta listened to the Pāṇḍava,
and guffawed.
Then, speaking sweetly and gently, he said
to ambidextrous Savyasācī Arjuna:

23 "Why are you so concerned
about my living in the forest?
Brave one! I have always lived in the forest;
forests appeal to me.

24 Tell me, tapasyā-rich ascetic,
what makes *you* select this place to come to,
full of dangers? I have always lived here
with the animals.

25 But you are soft, used to luxury,
you shine like a flame.
What makes you come
to this inaccessible forest?"

26 "I have my Gāṇḍīva-bow," replied Arjuna,
"and my fiery arrows.
I live in a mahā-forest
like a second Pāvaki-Kārtikeya.

27 Look, this ferocious rākṣasa,
who rushed at me
in the form of a beast –
I killed him all by myself."

28 "No," replied the Kirāta,
"it was my arrow that hit him first.
I am the one who sent him
to the abode of Yama.

29 I was the first to aim –
I was the first to see him –
it was my arrow that killed
the beast.

30 Just because you think much
of your strength,
you try to put others in the wrong.
Ill-ātmaned wretch, I will kill you.

31 Wait, I will destroy you
with thunder-like arrows.
Do the best you can –
try your arrows at me!"

32 Arjuna heard these words of the Kirāta
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and wrathfully shot
a stream of arrows.

33 The Kirāta laughed and received them
as if they were nothing.
Repeatedly he exclaimed,
"Scoundrel! Scoundrel!

34 Keep shooting at me!
Shoot the best *nārāca*-arrows you have,
heart-piercing ones!"
And Arjuna fired another tremendous volley.

35 Both, roused to anger,
poured volley upon volley
of fierce snake-arrows
at each other.

36 Śaṅkara-Śiva smilingly received
the shower of arrows
that Arjuna in his fury
shot at him.

37 The wielder of the trident
stood there
with unscathed body,
like a massive mountain.

38 Seeing that his arrows had no effect
on the Kirāta,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, surprised, shouted,
"*Sādhu! Sādhu*! Excellent! Excellent!"

39 *This lovely-limbed man of*
the hills is untouched
by the nārāca *arrows that I fire*
from the Gāṇḍīva.

40 *Who can he be?*
Is he the divinity Rudra-Śiva himself?
or a yakṣa? a god? an anti-god?
Gods do live on these excellent mountains.

41 *Who else but the trident-wielding god*
Pinākin-Śiva could remain unaffected
by the thousands of arrows
from my Gāṇḍīva?

42 *Let him be god or yakṣa –*
anyone but Rudra-Śiva –
and I'll pack him off to Yama's realm
with my arrows.

43 O rājā Janamejaya! Arjuna energetically recommenced
firing a rain of heart-piercing *nārāca*-arrows,
as profuse and proliferating
as spreading sunrays.

44 The lord of the world,
the great trident-wielder,
smiled and received them
as a mountain absorbs a hailstorm.

45 Soon Arjuna's quiver was empty.
When Phālguna-Arjuna saw
his arrows exhausted,
a great fear overcame him.

46 He remembered that Bhagavān Hutāśana-Agni
had once given him,
at the burning of the Khāṇḍava-forest,
two inexhaustible quivers.

47 *My arrows are all gone!*
What shall I shoot now?
Who is this creature
who swallows all my arrows?

48
Let me try felling him
as clubs fell elephants –
hit him with my bow-end,
and pack him off to Yama!

49
Mahā-radiant Arjuna, using his bow,
dragged towards him the Kirāta,
and began pummelling him with blows
that struck like thunderbolts.

50
Hardly had Kuntī's son, great foe-crusher,
started doing so
than the hill-man snatched away
the excellent Gāṇḍīva.

51
His bow snatched from his hand,
Arjuna, in a desperate attempt
to end the fight,
rushed at the Kirāta with a drawn sword.

52
The Kaurava descendant Arjuna brought
the sword down on the Kirāta's head
with a force that would have shattered
the hardest rock.

53
But the excellent sword splintered
the moment it touched the Kirāta's head.
Phālguna-Arjuna began hurling
tree trunks and boulders.

54
Bhagavān Śiva
in the form of the huge Kirāta
repulsed the shower of tree trunks and boulders.
Mahā-powerful Partha-Arjuna,

55
Fuming with anger,
rained blow upon blow
with his thunderbolt-hard fists
on the Kirāta.

56
Bhagavān Śiva too hit
at Phālguna-Arjuna with his fists,
which were like the thunderbolts
of Śakra-Indra.

57 As a result of the fist-duel
 between the Pāṇḍava and the Kirāta,
fearful sounds – *caṭācaṭa* –
 echoed in the forest.

58 It was an eerie
 and a horripilating fist-fight!
Like the duel between Vāsava-Indra and Vṛtra,
 it lasted briefly.

59 Jiṣṇu-Arjuna grappled the Kirāta
 against his chest,
and the Kirāta grappled back
 with equal strength.

60 So intense was the pressure
 of their arms and chests
that their bodies emitted smoke,
 as fire produces ash.

61 Mahādeva-Śiva hugged his adversary
 so hard and attacked with such strength
that Arjuna
 lost consciousness.

62 His body bruised and his breath choking,
 Phālguna-Arjuna, gripped by the god,
seemed to be melting into a writhing mass
 of fleshy pulp.

63 In the mahā-ātmaned god's grip,
 Arjuna suffocated,
and fell heavily on the ground.
 He looked like one dead.

64 But Pāṇḍava-Arjuna quickly recovered,
 stood up,
his body trickling blood,
 his mind bewildered.

65 He paid mental homage
 to trident-wielding Bhagavān Pinākin-Śiva,
fashioned a clay likeness of Śiva
 and worshipped it with garlands.

66 He saw the same garlands
appear on the Kirāta's head.
Arjuna, best of the Pāṇḍavas, delighted,
regained normalcy.

67 He prostrated himself at Bhava-Śiva's feet,
who was pleased
With a cloud-roaring voice,
Śiva said to astonished Arjuna:

68 "Phālguna-Arjuna,
your incomparable prowess pleases me.
There is no Kṣatriya
who has your courage and fortitude.

69 Mahā-muscled hero, bull-brave Bharata,
faultless one,
your prowess almost equals mine.
I am pleased with you. Look!

70 Large-eyed hero,
I will give you special vision to see me.
You were once a ṛṣi;
you will now be able to defeat even the gods.

71 I am so happy with you
that I will give you
an invincible weapon;
and soon you will be proficient in its use."

72 Phālguna-Arjuna saw the mahā-radiant god,
Mahādeva-Śiva,
the dweller of mountains,
the trident-wielder and his devī.

73 Conqueror-of-enemies'-cities Pārtha-Arjuna knelt
and bowed his head in *praṇāma*
before Hara-Śiva
and worshipped him.

74 "God of the cowrie-shell locks!
God of all the gods!
Destroyer of the eyes of Bhaga!
Great god of gods!
Supreme god, Mahādeva!
Blue-throated, matted-haired god!

75 Three-eyed god!
Lord of all!
I know you are the Cause of all causes.
You are the Refuge of the gods.
You are the Creator of the universe.

76 The three worlds
Of gods, and anti-gods, and mortals
Cannot vanquish you!
You are Śiva as Viṣṇu
And Viṣṇu as Śiva.

77 You destroyed the yajña of Dakṣa.
O Hari,
O Rudra,
I bow to you! Namaḥ!
You have an eye in your forehead,
O trident-wielder,
O Mīḍhuṣa, O beautiful one,
O Śarva!

78 Wielder of the trident!
Sūrya!
Auspicious-bodied god!
Bhagavān!
Lord of all creatures, Maheśvara,
I offer you my adoration.

79 Lord of all forms of life,
Source of the world's beneficence,
Cause of all causes,
Foremost Puruṣa,
Highest Hara, most subtle of all,

80 Supreme god Śaṅkara,
Forgive my transgression, Bhagavān.
I came to the mahā-mountain
To have your darshan,

81 For the mountain is dear to you
And holy men of tapasyā live on it.
O chief god, Deveśa,
Adoration of the worlds, Sarva-loka-namaskṛtaṁ,
I adore you, Bhagavān.

82 I fought with you ignorantly,
I was rash ignorantly,
Forgive me, Mahādeva-Śiva.
O Śaṅkara-Śiva,
I ask for your protection
Forgive me all that I have done."

83 The mahā-radiant bull-riding god
took Arjuna's handsome arms,
smiled, and said, "Phālguna-Arjuna,
you are forgiven."

84 Bhagavān Hara-Śiva,
rider of the bull,
embraced Partha-Arjuna warmly,
and consoled him, saying:

SECTION FORTY

1 "In your previous life
your were Nara, friend of Nārāyaṇa.
You passed thousands of years
in forest tapasyā.

2 You have immense prowess in you,
as is in Viṣṇu,
who is Puruṣottama, Supreme-among-men.
You two sustain the universe.

3 With the fear-instilling bow
whose twang is the roaring of clouds,
you and Krishna humbled
the anti-gods at Śakra-Indra's coronation.

4 This Gāṇḍīva is the very bow
you used at that time.
I was able to snatch it from your hands
by means of my māyā.

5 Your two quivers, O Pārtha-Arjuna,
will again become inexhaustible
O Kaurava descendant,
your body will be free from pain and illness.

6 Your glory will be such, Pārtha-Arjuna,
that none will be able to erase it.
You have pleased me.
Ask from me whatever you wish, Puruṣottama.

7 Foe-crusher, giver of respect
where respect is due,
none on earth or in heaven
can equal your prowess,
there is no Kṣatriya
who is superior to you."

8 Arjuna said, "O Vṛṣadhvaja, bull-flagged divinity,
if you are pleased to grant my wishes,
all I ask for, Lord, Prabhu,
is the celestial Pāśupata weapon

9 Known as the Brahmaśira,
the weapon you wield,
an awesome weapon,
which destroys the world at yuga-end.

10 For with the help of that weapon
and through your grace, Mahādeva-Śiva,
I will win the mahā-war against Karṇa, Kṛpa,
Bhīṣma, and Droṇa.

11 For with the help of that weapon
I can destroy the Danāva anti-gods,
rākṣasas, evil spirits, bloodsucking *piśācas,*
gandharvas and nāgas.

12 For this is the weapon that,
when released with mantras,
discharges thousands of darts and maces
and virulent snake-like arrows.

13 For this is the weapon whose power
will enable me to fight
Bhīṣma and Droṇa and Kṛpa
and the Sūta's abusive son Karṇa.

14 Bhagavān! Revered one! Destroyer of Bhaga's eyes!
I have only one ambition –
that when I fight them one day,
by your grace I should be the victor."

15 "Prowess-rich Pāṇḍava!" said Bhava-Śiva,
"I will give you the Pāśupata.
You have the skill
to hold, hurl, and reclaim it –

16 A skill that is not known
to Indra, Yama, Varuṇa, Vāyu,
or the rājā of the Yakṣas –
let alone human beings.

17 Remember, Pārtha-Arjuna,
this weapon should not be used unjustly.
If hurled at a weak enemy,
it could obliterate the earth.

18 Nothing moving or unmoving
in the three worlds
can escape its destruction.
Mind, eye, word, or bow can fire it."

19 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son heard this
(said Vaiśampāyana),
purified himself, approached Śiva reverentially,
and said, "Teach me."

20 Śiva gave to the excellent Pāṇḍava Arjuna
the secret of that Yama-like weapon –
how to shoot
and re-energise it.

21 The weapon was now Arjuna's
as it was once Umā's husband's –
the three-eyed god.
Arjuna accepted it gladly.

22 The whole earth, its mountains,
forests, trees, seas,
words, villages, towns and mines,
began to tremble.

23 Thousands of conches, *dundubhi*-drums
and trumpets were heard.
Tornadoes and mahā-whirlwinds began
to blow fiercely.

24 The gods and Dānava antigods saw
the manifested weapon
standing beside infinitely powerful
and heroic Pāṇḍava Arjuna.

25 Whatever imperfection there was in the body
of infinitely skilled Phālguna-Arjuna
disappeared at the touch
of three-eyed Śiva.

26 O rājā Janamejaya! The three-eyed divinity
said to Arjuna, "Visit heaven."
Arjuna bowed his head in *praṇāma,*
and stood with palms folded in *añjali.*

27 The lord of the gods, Śiva,
radiant mountain-dweller,
husband of Umā,
gave Arjuna the Gāṇḍīva,
the bow that destroys
piśācas and anti-gods

28 Accompanied by Umā,
the god-of-gods Śiva,
left the hill-region,
the resort of mahā-ṛṣis,
and ascended to the sky
before Arjuna's very eyes.

SECTION FORTY-ONE

1 The bull-riding wielder of the trident
disappeared before Arjuna's eyes
like the sun setting
in everyone's sight.

2 Arjuna, mighty foe-slayer,
stood there bewildered,
saying to himself,
Today I have seen Mahādeva-Śiva.

3 *My eyes have been blessed!*
I have seen and touched
three-eyed boon-giving Hara-Śiva,
welder of the trident!

4 *I am the most blessed of men!*
My mission is fulfilled,
I have conquered
all my enemies!

5 Even as prowess-rich Pārtha-Arjuna
thought in these terms,
there appeared the *vaidūrya*-dazzling
lord of the sea-world.
His marvellous radiance covered
all the quarters.

6 Nāgas, Daityas, Sādhyas,
male and female rivers
and the lesser gods accompanied
self-shining lord-of-waters Varuṇa.

7 Also, there arrived lord Kubera
of the golden body,
accompanied by numerous yakṣas;
he was seated in a glorious chariot.

8 The incredibly handsome lord of riches
came to see Arjuna.
His effulgence encompassed
the earth and the sky.

9 Illustrious and valiant Yama,
death-destroyer of the worlds,
with *pitṛs* in human forms,
also came there.

10 Dharmarāja Yama, Vivasvat's son,
whose ātman cannot even be conceived of,
carrying his rod,
riding a chariot,

11 Radiating light in the three worlds,
illuminating like a second sun at yuga-end
the realms
of Guhyakas, Gandharvas, and Nāgas.

12 As they descended
from the shining mahā-mountains,
they saw Arjuna engaged
in the strictest forms of tapasyā.

13 Bhagavān Śakra-Indra also arrived,
accompanied by his queen Indrāṇī,
seated on the elephant Airāvata,
surrounded by the gods.

14 A massive white umbrella
shaded his head:
he shone like the moon, the rājā of stars,
among soft white clouds.

15 Gandharvas and ṛṣis and ascetics
sang his praises;
atop a mountain,
he resembled the rising sun.

16 Perceptive and wise-in-dharma Yama,
in a cloud-booming voice,
spoke the following words
from the southern peak:

17 "Arjuna, Arjuna, look around you!
The guardians of the world, the Lokapālas,
have come here to give you
the darshan you deserve.

18 In a previous birth you were the infinite-minded,
mahā-powerful ṛṣi called Nara;
Brahmā wished it,
and you took human birth.

19 Defectless one, you will be responsible
for defeating the Vasu-born,
mahā-valiant grandfather Bhīṣma,
a supreme dharmātmā,

20 As well as Kṣatriyas of tremendous prowess,
whom Bharadvāja's son Droṇa protects,
and the mahā-heroic Dānava anti-gods
born as men.

21 The Dānava anti-god Nivātakavaca,
O Kaurava descendant,
and the mahā-hero who is the issue
of my father who lights up all the worlds –

22 Karṇa – will also be killed by you, Dhanañjaya;
and such gods
and Dānāva anti-gods and rākṣasas
as have taken birth on earth

23 Will meet death at your hands,
and then, Kuntī's son,
they will attain whatever realms
their karma determines.

24 Phālguna-Arjuna, your fame shall be known
the world over for all time,
for you have met in battle
and pleased Mahādeva-Śiva himself.

25 O mahā-muscled one! Viṣṇu and you will together
lighten the earth's burden.
Take this weapon, my punishing rod,
which can never be repulsed.
With this you will perform
mahā-heroic deeds."

26 O descendant of Kuru, Janamejaya!
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son gladly accepted the mace
and the mantras governing
its hurling and withdrawing.

27 From the western peak, Varuṇa,
yellow-cloud-coloured lord of the waters, said:

28 "You, Pārtha-Arjuna,
are foremost among Kṣatriyas
and you know a Kṣatriya's dharma.
Look at me, Varuṇa, lord of the waters!

29 None is able to escape the nooses
that I fling –
I give you my Vāruṇi weapons, Kuntī's son,
and the knowledge of their use.

30 In the battle fought over Tāraka,
thousands of mahā-ātmaned Daitya anti-gods
were captured
by means of my nooses.

31 I give you these with pleasure, mahā brave one.
Take them from me –
even Antaka-Death will not escape,
should he try to harm you.

32 If you enter the battlefield
armed with this weapon,
the whole earth will soon have
no Kṣatriyas left."

33 After Yama and Varuṇa
had gifted their weapons,
the lord of wealth Kubera spoke
from the peak of Kailāsa:

34 "Wise and mahā-powerful son of Pāṇḍu,
you have pleased me.
Meeting you is like meeting
an invincible warrior.

35 Ambidexterous wielder of the bow, Savyasācī!
You who were once a god,
a mahā-powerful eternal hero,
you practised penance with me in the past.

36 Bull-brave hero! Today I will give you
the power of divine sight
with which you will defeat the formidable anti-gods,
O mahā-muscled one.

37 I present you with a weapon so excellent
that with it
you will be able to reduce
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons to ashes.

38 This is my favourite weapon,
the Antardhāna:
its radiance and energy
are able to put one's foes to sleep.

39 When mahā-ātmaned Śaṅkara Śiva killed Tripura,
this weapon was used
to annihilate many otherwise
invulnerable mahā-anti-gods.

40 Truly valiant one,
I now gift this to you;
you have the dignified strength of Meru,
You should possess this weapon."

41 Arjuna, the brave, mahā-muscled Kaurava,
graciously accepted
the divine weapon
offered by Kubera.

42 Speaking sweetly and gently
to Pṛthā-Kuntī's untiring son,
the king of the gods Devarāja Indra
said in a kettledrum-sonorous voice:

43 "You are the ancient Īśāna,
O mahā-muscled son of Kuntī;
you have already achieved all
that a god can achieve.

44 Mahā effulgent foe-subduer,
now you must prepare yourself
for the greatest mission of all –
you must ascend to heaven.

45 The chariot driven by Mātali
will soon arrive on earth to take you;
and I, O Kaunteya-Arjuna,
will give you divine weapons."

46 Seeing all the Lokapāla lords of the world
gathered on the mountain peaks,
Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
was wonderstruck.

47 Mahā-radiant Arjuna then offered
the customary pūjā-respect
to the Lokapāla world-lords
with gifts of words, water, and fruits.

48 They blessed Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
and returned –
all the self-coursing lords of the world
returned to their realms.

49 With the remarkable weapons
now in his possession,
bull-brave Arjuna thought himself fortunate,
his mission fulfilled.

SECTION FORTY-TWO

1 After the Lokapāla guardians of the world left
(said Vaiśampāyana),
foe-crushing Pārtha-Arjuna
thought of Rājendra Devarāja Indra's chariot.

2 The instant wise Guḍākeśa-Arjuna's imagination
dwelt on the subject,
the mahā-lustrous Mātali-driven chariot
arrived,

3 Dispelling sky-darkness,
cleaving through clouds,
and flooding the heavens
with a cloud-roaring noise.

4 Fearful swords, *śakti*-missiles,
fierce-looking clubs, darts,
lightning-tipped weapons,
divine mahā-lustrous thunderbolts,

5 Thunder-weapons,
wheeled fire-shooters operating
on the principle of air-expansion,
cloud-reverberating weapons,
were all in the armoury
of Indra's chariot.

6 Also, massive-bodied, horrific Nāgas
with fire-breathing mouths,
and stone-missiles
resembling white fleecy clouds.

7 Ten thousand golden wind-swift horses pulled
that celestial māyā-producing chariot
with such speed
that the eye could not see it flash past.

8 On the chariot Arjuna saw
the mahā-lustrous Vaijayanta flag
like a dark-blue lotus,
on a gold-decorated flagstaff.

9 Mahā-muscled Pārtha-Arjuna saw
a golden-bright charioteer,
and he surmised that the chariot must belong
to one of the gods.

10 While Phālguna-Arjuna was thinking this,
Mātali descended
from the chariot,
and respectfully said:

11 "*Bho bhoḥ*, fortunate one, Śakra-Indra's son!
Indra wants to see you.
Climb into this chariot,
sent by Indra to fetch you.

12 Your father, finest of the gods, Śatakratu-Indra,
recipient of a thousand yajñas,
said to me,
'Bring Kuntī's son before the gods.'

13 Śakra-Indra, surrounded by gods,
ṛṣis, gandharvas, and apsarās,
is waiting eagerly
to see you.

14 By order of the subduer-of-Pāka,
Pākaśāsana-Indra,
come with me to the realms of the gods,
and receive your weapons."

15 "Mātali," said Arjuna,
"I will go with you in the chariot
which hundred Rājasūyas
and Aśvamedha-horse-sacrifices cannot obtain.

16 Even the most fortune-favoured kings
who have performed the most splendid yajñas,
even the gods and Dānava anti-gods
cannot ride in this excellent chariot.

17 The man who has no tapasyā
will not be able to see and touch
this divine mahā-chariot,
let alone ride it.

18 Holy one, you climb in first.
When the horses have quietened,
I will climb in,
like a good man following virtue."

19 Mātali heard;
and Śakra-Indra's charioteer quickly got in,
and pacified
the restless horses.

20 Kuntī's son Arjuna bathed in the Gaṅgā;
with purified body and peaceful mind,
the Kaurava descendant
recited from the scriptures.

21 He offered oblations
to the spirits of his ancestors,
and invoked Mandara,
the rājā of mountains.

22 "Lord of mountains!
Refuge of the noble
And good-intentioned munis
Who seek the path to heaven!

23 Through your grace,
O holy mountain,
Brahmins, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas
Attain heaven and live with the gods.

24 Rājā of mountains! Mahā-mountain!
I have lived happily on you,
Amongst holy munis and pilgrimage-places.
Today I take your leave to go.

25 Often have my eyes been blessed
With your green slopes and forests,
Your rivers and brooks and sacred pilgrimage-spots.

26 I have tasted your fragrant fruits,
I have drunk the sweet water
That flows down your body.

27 Mountain,
The water of your body is like nectar.
Like a child happy
In the lap of his father,

28 I have been happy,
O mountain rājā, lord, *prabhu*,
In your lap, where apsarās play,
And the words of the Vedas are heard.

29 My days have been happy
On your slopes, O mountain."
Arjuna, slayer of his enemies,
Bid farewell to the mountain,

30 And, shining like the sun,
Ascended the celestial chariot.
Happily he coursed through the sky
In that sun-brilliant vehicle,

31 Till he could no more be seen
By the eyes of the dharmātmās.
Then he saw thousands
Of wondrous chariots

32 In regions where the sun never shines,
Nor the moon, where fire does not burn,
Where light is the produce
Of the deepest tapasyā.

33 And the radiant regions
That are seen as stars from the earth,
Or like small lamps
Because they are so far away,

34 Were seen by Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
In their self-shining splendour,
Rich with pristine glory.

35 He also saw the rāja-ṛṣis
of tremendous merit,
all heroes who had met death
on the field of battle,

36 And those who achieved heaven
through profound tapasyā,
and hundreds of thousands of gandharvas
raidant like the sun,

37 As well as Guhyakas, ṛṣis and apsarās.
Seeing these self-shining realms,
Phālguna-Arjuna,
struck with wonder,

38 Turned to Mātali, who explained,
"These are the good people,
Pārtha-Arjuna, who have found their rewards
in suitable realms.

39 And you can see them, lord,
from the earth twinkling like stars."
At the gate, he saw the white,
always-victorious elephant

40 Airāvata, whose four tusks resemble
the four peaks of Mount Kailāsa.
Beside the Siddhas,
the finest of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas,

41 Arjuna shone like Māndhātā,
a king of the ancient past.
Lotus-eyed Arjuna passed
through many realms allotted to rājās.

42 Passing through the heavenly realms,
mahā-illustrious Arjuna
came finally
to Śakra-Indra's city Amarāvatī.

SECTION FORTY-THREE

1 In that lovely city he saw
Siddhas and Cāraṇas;
sacred trees flourished everywhere,
and flowers of all seasons.

2 Soft winds carrying the fragrance
of sparkling flowers
wafted in the city,
as if inviting him.

3 Welcomed by the divine trees and flowers,
Arjuna saw the garden
called Nandana,
where apsarās sported.

4 Only men of profound tapasyā
and those who offer sacred libations
can experience this realm; never those
who run away from the field of battle,

5 Never those who do not observe penance
and who eschew yajña,
nor those who mock the Vedas and *śrutis*,
nor those who refuse
to bathe in sacred *tīrthas*,
and deny yajña-charity;

6 Never those who obstruct
the performance of yajñas,
nor those addicted to drinking
and meat-eating,
nor those who seduce a guru's wife,
nor those who are wicked-ātmaned.

7 Mahā-muscled Arjuna saw that divine garden
echoing with melodious songs,
as he entered the entrancing city
of Śakra-Indra.

8 He saw thousands of chariots,
able to travel-at-will,
stationed in their respective areas
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

9 Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna,
praised by gandharvas and apsarās, entered,
fanned by the delicate fragrance
of soothing breezes.

10 The gods, together with the gandharvas
and delighted ṛṣis,
sang the exploits
of untiringly valorous Pārtha-Arjuna.

11 Divine music accompanied the blessings
poured on him;
on all sides the great hero
heard conches and *dundubhi*-drums.

12 Eulogised by the gods, commanded by Indra,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Arjuna
went to the star-sprinkled realm
called the Suravithi,

13 Where he met Sādhyas, Viśvas,
Maruts, the twin Aśvins,
the Ādityas, Vasus, Rudras,
and Brahma-ṛṣis,

14 Many rāja-ṛṣis,
many kings with Dilīpa at their head,
Tumburu, Nārada,
and the two gandharvas Hāhā and Hūhū.

15 The Kaurava descendant paid his respects to all,
after which
the great foe-crusher saw
the thousand-yajña-receiving Devarāja Indra.

16 He alighted from the excellent chariot.
Mahā-muscled Pṛthā-Kuntī's son
saw his father, king-of-gods Indra,
slayer-of-Pāka Pākaśāsana-Indra.

17 A bright white umbrella on a golden staff
shaded Indra's head;
a divinely-scented fly-whisk
fanned him.

18 Gandharvas, led by Viśvāvasu,
praised his glories;
bards and singers and Brahmins
chanted from the Ṛg, Yajur and Sāma.

19 Kuntī's son Arjuna approached,
bent his head low, and paid his respects;
Indra embraced him
with smooth and handsome arms,

20 Took him by the hand;
then Śakra-Indra made him sit
on a part of his own sacred seat
meant only for gods and ṛṣis.

21 Devendra-Indra smelt the low-bent head
of Arjuna; and then the slayer-of-enemies
Indra made Arjuna
sit in his lap.

22 Pārtha-Arjuna, sitting in Śakra-Indra's lap,
shone with such grandeur
that he appeared to all to be
a second Vāsava-Indra.

23 Affectionately touching him,
the slayer-of-Vrtra Indra
ran his perfumed fingers
on the face of Arjuna.

24 He patted and stroked Arjuna
with hands
which carried the marks of the thunderbolt –
running them on Arjuna's arms

25 Which were like golden pillars,
hard-muscled
with constant stretching of the bow-string.
Indra lovingly looked

26 At Guḍākeśa-Arjuna;
yet the thousand-eyed god, slayer of Vṛtra,
though his eyes grew large with joy,
seemed not to be satiated.

27 Sitting together,
they lent radiance to the sabhā,
like the sun and moon on the fourteenth day
of the dark fortnight.

28 Gandharvas, led by Tumburu,
skilled in sacred and secular music,
sang the most exquisite
of melodies.

29 Ghṛtācī, Menakā, Rambhā, Purvacitti,
Svayaṁprabhā,
Urvaśī, Miśrakeśī, Daṇḍagaurī, Varūthinī,

30 Gopālī, Sahajanyā, Kumbhayonī, Prajāgarā,
Citrasenā, Citralekhā, Sahā, Madhurasvarā –

31 These and thousands
of other lotus-eyed apsarās danced there,
entrancing the minds
of the perfected mortals, the Siddhas.

32 They had mahā-waists, mahā-hips,
they cast sidelong glances,
and made undulating gestures,
they shook their breasts:
they did all to captivate the minds and hearts
of the spectators.

SECTION FORTY-FOUR

1 The gods and gandharvas,
knowing Sakra-Indra's mind,
prepared an excellent *arghya*-welcome
for Pārtha-Arjuna.

2 They brought him water to wash
his face and feet,
and escorted him to the palace
of Purandara-Indra.

3 Honoured by the pūjā,
Jiṣṇu-Arjuna lived in his father's house,
and began learning the art
of handling the mahā-weapons.

4 He received from Śakra-Indra
the terrible Thunder-Weapon,
and the mahā-deafening Lightning whose flashes
suggest clouds and dancing peacocks.

5 After receiving the weapons,
Arjuna thought of his brothers.
On Purandara-Indra's order,
he spent five happy years there.

6 At the proper time,
Śakra-Indra advised Pārtha-Arjuna, "Kuntī's son,
learn the arts of singing and dancing
from Citrasena.

7 Learn music that only the gods know,
and men never hear.
If you do this, Kuntī's son,
you will immensely benefit."

8 Purandara-Indra introduced Arjuna
to his *sakhā*-friend Citrasena,
and Arjuna spent happy and inspiring days
with Citrasena.

9 Citrasena taught him
vocal and instrumental music and dancing.
But memories of the shameful dice-game
made tapasyā-practising Arjuna restless.

10 He remembered Śakuni, Subala's son,
and angrily desired Duḥśāsana's death.
Nonetheless,
he enjoyed the dancing and singing
of the gandharvas,
and learnt excellently.

11 He studied vocal and instrumental music
and dancing,
but the mind of the foe-slayer Arjuna,
remembering
his brothers and mother Kuntī,
continued to be uneasy.

SECTION FORTY-FIVE

1 One day Śakra-Indra, noticing
that Pārtha-Arjuna's eyes wandered
in Urvaśī's direction,
said to Citrasena in private:

2 "Rājā of the gandharvas, tiger-among-men,
go to Urvaśī, foremost of apsarās,
and see that she attends
on Phālguna-Arjuna.

3 He is already made proficient
in the weapons of war;
now make him skilled
in the arts of pleasing women."

4 Citrasena replied, "It will be done."
Commanded by Vāsava-Indra,
the Gandharva rājā
approached exquisite Urvaśī,

5 She received him delightedly
and honoured him.
He sat down, relaxed and, smiling,
said to graceful Urvaśī:

6 "Lovely-hipped lady,
I come here on instructions
from the sole rājā of heaven
who wants a favour.

7 Known for dignity, good manners,
handsomeness, self-discipline;
famous for his feats,
respected by the pious, full of poise;

8 A genius of a man, energetic,
forgiving, unmalicious,
a student of the four Vedas, the Upaniṣads,
their branches, the Purāṇas, the fifth Veda;

9 Respectful to his gurus,
learned in the eight guṇas
of the wise mind; who, by brahmacarya,
ability, birth, and age,

10 Can protect heaven itself, as Maghavat-Indra does;
an unboastful hero,
one who gives due honour;
who can see the smallest detail
in its full importance,
a soft-spoken man

11 Who pleases his friends and dependents
with food and drink,
a truth-speaker, a receiver of pūjā-respect,
eloquent, eye-pleasing, modest;

12 Kind to his bhaktas,
helpful, loved by all, strict in promise,
like Mahendra-Indra and Varuṇa
in noble qualities –

13 Such a man is valiant Arjuna.
Now you know him.
Lovely lady, he is fit to taste
the fruits of heaven.
Śakra-Indra desires that you today sit at his feet.
Do this, for you please Dhanañjaya-Arjuna."

14 Urvaśī of perfect features
listened to Citrasena attentively.
She smiled
and replied light-heartedly:

15 "So many virtues – all rolled up in one man!
Truly!
With those guṇas any man would do –
so why not Arjuna?

16 Because Mahendra-Indra commands me,
because I am your friend,
because Arjuna has so many virtues,
I am already in love with him.
Go then.
I will happily go to him."

SECTION FORTY-SIX

1 Promising the gandharva his request,
smiling Urvaśī,
eager for the darshan of Pārtha-Arjuna,
bathed.

2 She put on ornaments and scented garlands.
The god of love Manmatha had charmed her
with a vision of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's grace
and handsomeness.

3 Inflamed by Manmatha, the god of love,
she dreamt of Arjuna
making love to her on a large,
luxurious bed.

4 So intense was her longing
for the man she loved – Phālguna-Arjuna –
that she withdrew her mind
from all other objects;

5 And when the moon rose and twilight arrived,
large-hipped Urvaśī
made her way to the house
of Pārtha-Arjuna.

6 She was radiantly lovely.
her shining soft, long braid of hair
was fragrant
with clusters of flowers.

7 Her grace, her loveliness,
the curving of her eyebrows,
her soft syllables, her moon-like face –
they rivalled the enchantment of the moon.

8 Her large, curved breasts,
adorned with a gold chain,
divine perfume, delicate scandalpaste,
heaved as she walked.

9 The weight of her heavy breasts
made her stoop slightly
at every step, revealing the beauty
of her waist's triple fold.

10 Her graceful, round haunches,
like two shapely mounds,
looked like love's own temple;
golden chains glittered

11 On it; a temple to seduce
the saintliest divine ṛṣi;
it was mind-ravishing,
draped in transparent dress.

12 Her lovely-ankled, flat-soled feet
had copper-coloured toes;
they curved like the back of a tortoise,
they were decorated
with rows of tiny *kiṅkiṇī* bells
that tinkled as she walked.

13 The little wine she had sipped
made her light headed;
inflamed by desire, she swayed as she walked –
a ravishing sight.

14 Heaven has many enchantments,
but the Siddhas, Cāraṇas, and Gandharvas
knew no sight move enchanting
than Urvaśī walking.

15 Her breasts were covered
with a cloud-soft cloth:
she looked like the moon
moving behind soft-white clouds.

16 Wind-swift, mind-swift,
the sweet-smiling lady
arrived at the house of Phālguna-Arjuna,
son of Pāṇḍu, in no time.

17 She stopped at the gate.
O finest-of-men Janamejaya!
Lovely-eyed Urvaśī sent word to Arjuna
through the gate-keeper.

18 O rājā Janamejaya! She stepped inside
the elegant house of Arjuna, who,
surprised to have a lady visitor at night,
went to greet her.

19 Seeing Urvaśī, Pārtha-Arjuna lowered his eyes
out of embarrassment.
He greeted her with the pūjā-respect
one shows a superior.

20 "Most excellent of apsarās,"
Arjuna said, "I bow to you.
What is your desire?
How can I help you?"

21 Urvaśī, hearing these words,
could not control herself.
She repeated to Arjuna
all that Gandharva Citrasena had said.

22 "Finest of men," she said,
"let me tell you all
that Citrasena told me,
which is why I am here.

23 Your coming here was the cause
of Mahendra-Indra summoning
a large gathering in heaven
where celebrations could be held.

24 To that assembly there came, O finest of men,
the Rudras,
the Ādityas, the Vasus,
and the Aśvins,

25 As well as many maharṣis,
and royal ṛṣis,
Siddhas, Cāraṇas, and Yakṣas,
and mahā-*uraga*-Nāgas.

26 When these god-lke people,
shining like the sun or moon or fire,
sat down
according to rank, prestige, and prowess,

27 The Gandharvas, O large-eyed hero,
began playing the vīṇā,
and sang exquisite, haunting songs
of bewitching melody, O son of Śakra-Indra.

28 Then the chief apsarās began to dance,
O Kuru-descendant, Pārtha-Arjuna!
At that time you looked at me once,
steadily and long.

29 When the gathering dispersed,
the gods, commanded by your father,
returned
to their respective abodes.

30 The chief apsarās also,
with all the others,
on your father's instructions,
returned to their houses.

31 Lotus-eyed one,
commanded by Śakra-Indra,
Citrasena came to see me in my house,
and said:

32 'Lovely complexioned lady,
the chief of the gods has sent me.
Do what is pleasing to Mahendra-Indra,
to me, and to you.

33 Lovely-hipped lady, favour Pārtha-Arjuna
who is brave
like Śakra-Indra in battle,
and has a generous heart.'

34 Commanded by him and by your father,
I am here, O faultless one.
Great foe-subduer, I come here
in order to serve you.

35 I have fallen in love with your virtues,
O hero.
This is all I want.
It seems I have always loved you."

36 When he heard her speak in heaven
in that way,
Arjuna was so embarrassed
that he shut his ears, and said:

37 "Beautiful lady, lovely-faced one,
it is not proper that I should hear all this.
Fortune-favoured lady!
I look on you as a guru's wife.

38 You are to me like mahā-fortune-favoured Kuntī,
like Indra's wife Śacī.
I do not have the least doubt about this,
gracious lady.

39 Lovely-smiling, auspicious lady,
it is true that I looked steadily at you,
but there was
a special reason.

40 I looked at you with staring eyes,
happily,
because I said to myself:
Here is the mother of the Pauravas.

41 O gracious apsarā,
do not have any other feelings for me,
for you are the mother of my race,
a guru above all gurus."

42 "Son of Devarāja-Indra," replied Urvaśī,
"we apsarās have no restrictions,
we are free to choose.
O hero! Do not idealise me as a guru.

43 All the sons and grandsons of the Pauravas
who receive
their tapasyā's rewards here,
have been entertained by me here;
you should not consider this
as wrong.

44 O gracious one! Be kind to me.
Do not reject me. I burn with love.
You know how to give proper respect.
I am your bhaktā. Take me."

45 "Lovely hipped, faultless featured lady,"
Arjuna replied, "listen to me.
Let the four directions and four sub-directions
and the gods hear!

46 Perfect one, you are to me
like Kuntī, Mādrī, and Śacī –
you are the mother of our race –
someone to respect.

47 Lovely-complexioned one, go, I beg of you,
I lower my head at your feet.
You are my pūjā-worthy mother.
Treat me as a son."

48 When Urvaśī heard this from Pārtha-Arjuna,
she lost her head in anger.
Trembling, with furrowed brow,
she said to Dhanañjaya-Arjuna:

49 "Because you insult a woman
who comes to you
stricken with the arrows of Kāma,
and because your father ordered her to do so,

50 Pārtha-Arjuna, you will have to live among women,
without respect,
as a dancer;
you will be deprived of your virility."

51 She breathed deeply,
her lips kept quivering,
and she hurried to her house
after cursing Arjuna.

52 Foe-subduing Arjuna rushed
to Citrasena
and explained to him
the happenings of that night

53 Between him and Urvaśī.
Pāṇḍava-Arjuna
kept repeating the curse
that Urvaśī had cast on him.

54 Citrasena reported the story
to Śakra-Indra,
and Hari-vāhana-Indra called his son to him
in private,

[III:46:55-63]

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55 Consoled him with sweet words
and said to him:
"Excellent one, *tāta*, my dear son,
you have made Pṛthā-Kuntī a true mother.

56 Mahā-muscled hero,
giver of appropriate respect,
you have shamed the ṛṣis with your self-discipline.
Urvaśī's curse is a blessing,

57 One day it will prove to be
Of immense benefit to you.

58 Blameless one, the thirteenth year
of your exile
must be passed in disguise;
then the curse will help you.

59 After passing one year
as a eunuch dancer,
you will recover your sexual powers,
my son."

60 Listening to these words,
foe-subduing Arjuna
was relieved and glad,
and immediately forgot the curse.

61 Pāṇḍu's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
enjoyed himself
in the divine realm
in the company of illustrious Citrasena.

62 The sexual feelings of the man
who listens to this story
of Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
never turn wickedly lustful.

63 And excellent men
who hear this story
of Phālguna-Arjuna's purity,
freed from pride
and anger and lust,
find joy in heaven.

SECTION FORTY-SEVEN

1 In the course of his wanderings,
mahā-ṛṣi Lomaśa
went to the abode of Śakra-Indra
to met the lord of heaven.

2 The mahā-muni namaskāra-ed the rājā of the gods.
He saw Arjuna, the son of Pāṇḍu,
sitting on half
of Vāsava-Indra's throne.

3 The māha-ṛṣis there offered him pūjā-respect;
then that finest of the twice-born sat,
on Śakra-Indra's request,
on a splendid seat.

4 He wondered how Pārtha-Arjuna
who was only a Kṣatriya
had managed to sit on the same seat
as Indra.

5 *What was his unique good karma?*
What special regions had he conquerred
to obtain a seat
that even the gods worshipped?

6 Śakra-Indra read his mind,
and the husband of Śacī,
the Vṛtra-slaying lord of heaven
smiled and said to Lomaśa:

7 "Ṛṣi of Brahmā,
let me talk about what you are thinking.
Arjuna has taken birth among humans,
but he is no mortal.

8 This mahā-muscled hero is my son,
born to Kuntī.
He has come here to get weapons.
For some strange reason,

9 You are unable to recognise him
as the splendid ṛṣi of the past.
Listen: I will tell you who he is,
why he is here.

10 First, you must realise
that the two excellent ṛṣis
Nara and Nārāyaṇa, of the past,
are Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

11 Nara and Nārāyaṇa are renowned
in the three worlds;
they came to earth to accomplish
a special purpose.

12 The sacred āśrama
that even gods and mahātmā ṛṣis worship,
known as Badari,
which is situated at the source

13 Of the Gaṅgā and visited by Siddhas and Cāranas,
O Brahmin,
was once the abode
of Viṣṇu and Jiṣṇu.

14 O ṛṣi of Brahmā,
these mahā-radiant ones, at my request,
took birth on earth. These mahā-heroes will remove
the sorrows of the world.

15 There are some anti-gods
known as the Nivātakavacas
who, proud of their special boon,
even now afflict us.

16 They are so arrogant
that they intend using their boon
to destroy the gods
whom they detest.

17 They are the fearful, mahā-powerful sons of Danu
and they live in the Pātāla region of hell;
all the gods together
cannot defeat them.

18 Noble Brahmin, Viṣṇu, slayer of Madhu,
known on earth as Kapila,
is the invincible divinity
called Hari.

19 It was he
    who with a single consuming glance
destroyed all the mahā-ātmaned sons of Sagara
    when they entered the Rasātala underworld.

20 He and Arjuna together or singly
    can protect us in a mahā-battle
with the anti-gods.
    No doubt of this.

21 Just as he slew the Nagas
    in a great lake,
he can destroy at sight the Nivātakavacas
    and their followers.

22 But Krishna the slayer of Madhu
    must not be asked to do anything trivial,
for the worlds may perish
    under his onslaught.

23 Valiant Arjuna by himself can take on
    all of them.
When he destroys them all in battle,
    he will return to earth.

24 Go back to earth. I ask you this.
    You will find there
brave Yudhiṣṭhira
    living in the forest of Kāmyaka.

25 Tell Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira, who is devoted to truth,
    that he should not worry about Phālguna-Arjuna.
Arjuna will return to earth
    loaded with weapons.

26 Without Arjuna's prowess and the weapons,
    Yudhiṣṭhira cannot fight
Bhīṣma, Drona, and others.
    Also inform him

27 That mahā-minded and mahā-muscled
    Guḍākeśa Arjuna
has acquired all the weapons
    and mastered singing and dancing.

28 Tell him, 'Foremost foe-subduer,
you too, with all your brothers,
should embark
on a long pilgrimage.

29 Bathe in the holy waters,
and cleanse yourself of impurities.
Cool the heart's fever, O Indra-among-rājās,
and enjoy your kingdom.'

30 Excellent Brahmin,
make it your duty to protect
with your tapasyā
the pilgrimage-engaged Yudhiṣṭhira.

31 Terrifying rākṣasas lurk
in mountain caves and in rocky areas.
See that he is protected
from them."

32 After Mahendra-Indra had finished,
dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna also spoke
to Lomaśa with deep respect, saying,
"Look after Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira.

33 O excellent mahā-muni, under your protection
let the rājā visit
the various places of pilgrimage
and give generously in charity."

34 Lomśa, ṛṣi of mahā-tapasyā,
left, saying,
"I will do as you say";
he went to the Kāmyaka forest.

35 There he saw Kuntī's son,
foe-subduing Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
surrounded by holy men
and his brothers.

SECTION FORTY-EIGHT

1 “How marvellous – these deeds
of incalculably illustrious Pārtha-Arjuna,”
said Janamejaya. “What was mahā learned
Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s reaction to all this? Tell me.”

2 When Ambikā’s son Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra heard
from the great ṛṣi Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa
that Pārtha-Arjuna had succeeded
in going to the abode of Śakra-Indra
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Ambikā’s son said to Śañjaya:

3 “Charioteer, do you know in detail
all about the acts of brilliant Pārtha-Arjuna
which I have heard
from beginning to end?

4 My vicious-ātmaned son is mad.
He schemes up various evil policies:
he will be the ruin
of this earth.

5 Mahā-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira,
who always speaks *amṛta*-sweet words
and who has Dhanañjaya-Arjuna on his side,
will surely rule the three worlds.

6 Is there anyone who can escape
death and decay? – let him –
but he will not escape
Arjuna’s fierce, stone-sharpened arrows.

7 My wicked-ātmaned sons,
who will have to fight
the invincible Pāṇḍavas,
are under the shadow of death.

8 I think of this all day and night,
but see no one among us
who will be able to withstand
the Gāṇḍīva-wielder.

9 Even if Droṇa, Bhīṣma and Karṇa
challenge him,
I can see mahā-world-calamity
but not victory for us.

10 Karṇa is impulsive and sentimental,
ācārya Droṇa is old and Arjuna's guru.
But Arjuna
is strong, proud, firm, powerful.

11 They are all invincible –
all these excellent heroes –
all skilled, all brilliant.
The war will be a terrifying one.

12 They will not be satisfied with winning the world
by defeating their enemy.
Karṇa and Phālguna-Arjuna
will want each other's blood.

13 But the man who can defeat
or kill Arjuna does not exist.
How will Arjuna's anger against me
be appeased?

14 Heroic Arjuna, the equal of lord-of-gods Indra,
once gratified Agni in Khāṇḍava.
He defeated the kings
for the Rājasūya mahā-sacrifice.

15 O Sañjaya, *tāta*, my child,
lightning hitting a mountain leaves
at least a portion unscathed,
but Pārtha-Arjuna's arrows destroy utterly.

16 Like the rays of the sun
scorching moving and unmoving objects,
diadem-wearing Kirīṭin-Arjuna's arrows
will scorch my sons.

17 It seems to me that the armies
of the Bharatas have already
scattered helter-skelter from ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna's chariot wheels.

18 The Creator created Kirīṭin-Arjuna
to be our all-destroying destroyer.
He is our foe, he vomits arrows.
Who can defeat him?"

SECTION FORTY-NINE

1 "What you say about Duryodhana,"
Sañjaya replied, "is true, O rājā.
In fact, O ruler of the earth,
all your words ring true.

2 The mahā-radiant Pāṇḍavas
blazed with anger when they saw
their illustrious wife Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
dragged into the sabhā.

3 Mahārāja! When they heard the cruel words
of Duḥśāsana and Karṇa,
their anger became so violent
that forgiveness was unthinkable.

4 Mahārāja! I have heard
how Pārtha Arjuna was able in a duel
to please with his bow
eleven-formed Sthāṇu-Śiva.

5 The god-of-gods, Bhagavān Śiva himself,
disguised as a Kirāta,
fought a duel with Phālguna-Arjuna
to test his prowess.

6 That was when the Lokapāla guardians of the world
came before the untiringly valorous hero
and gave him
their divine weapons.

7 Is there any man on earth
except Phālguna-Arjuna
who can hope for a darshan of these gods
in their real forms?

8 O rājā! What man is there to vanquish
the hero
who could not be vanquished
even by eight-imaged Maheśvara-Śiva?

9 By dragging Draupadī
and provoking the Pāṇḍavas,
your sons have brought upon themselves
this fearful, horripilating doom.

10 When he saw Duryodhana
bare his thigh before Draupadī,
Bhīma's lips quivered uncontrollably,
and he vowed:

11 'Scoundrel, you may be a great gambler,
but at the end of the thirteenth year
I will smash your thigh
with my mace.'

12 The Pāṇḍavas are excellent warriors,
they shine immeasurably,
they know the use of all weapons,
even gods cannot defeat them.

13 I fear that the Pāṇḍavas, Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons,
angered by the insult to their wife,
will slaughter all your sons
in battle."

14 "Charioteer," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"it was wrong of Karṇa
to use foul language.
It was wrong to demean Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

15 How can my evil-minded sons live
when their eldest brother – their guru –
has decided not to follow
the path of righteousness?

16 Charioteer, I am blind, I cannot walk by myself.
My wicked son thinks
I am a fool
and he will not listen to my words.

17 And his wicked advisers – Karṇa,
Subala's son Sakuni and others –
encourage his viciousness,
and he doesn't understand.

18 The arrows that powerful Pārtha-Arjuna
shoots even playfully
can destroy my sons –
leave aside those he shoots in anger!

19 The arrows that fly from Pārtha-Arjuna's bow
charged with his mantras
become divine missiles
and can humble even the gods.

20 Is there anything in this world
that can escape him
whose advisor, friend and protector is Janārdana,
Hari, Krishna, lord of the three worlds?

21 Sañjaya, wonderful, wonderful! –
the news that Arjuna
fought Mahādeva-Śiva!
So I have heard.

22 When Arjuna, with Krishna's help, gratified Agni
by making him consume
the entire Khāṇḍava forest,
all the world witnessed the feat.

23 When Bhīma, Pārtha-Arjuna
and Vāsudeva-Krishna of the Sātvatas
become angry, my sons and Śakuni
are no match for them."

SECTION FIFTY

1 "O muni! Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra," said Janamejaya
"must have indulged
in useless lamentation
after allowing the Pāṇḍavas to be exiled.

2 How could the rājā permit
petty-minded Duryodhana
to stir the mahā-chariot-hero Pāṇḍavas
to such unappeasable anger?

3 What did the Pāṇḍavas eat
when they lived in the forest?
Did they gather their food,
or did they grow it?"

4 O rājā! The bull-brave Pāṇḍavas
(replied Vaiśampāyana) subsisted
on forest-food and the meat of deer,
killed with plain arrows, –
meat they sanctified by dedicating it first
to the Brahmins.

5 O rājā! Fire-worshipping
and non-fire-worshipping Brahmins
followed the large-bow-carrying Pāṇḍavas
into the forest.

6 There were ten thousand mahā-ātmaned
snātaka novitiate Brahmins,
who knew all the truths of mokṣa,
whom Yudhiṣṭhira fed in the forest.

7 After the hunt, he sanctified *ruru*-deer
and black deer and other animals
by dedicating a portion
first to those Brahmins.

8 None of those who lived with Yudhiṣṭhira
in the forest
looked pale, weak, thin, diseased,
timid, or fearful.

9 Finest-of-the-Kauravas Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
looked after his brothers
as if they were his sons,
and his relatives as if they were his brothers.

10 Famed Draupadī would offer food
first to her husbands and Brahmins –
as did their mother –
and herself eat last.

11 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira in the east,
Bhīma southwards,
and the twins west and north –
and the forest-deer were hunted
by these bow-wielders
for the sake of their meat.

12 The Pāṇḍavas lived
in the forest of Kāmyaka
for five years;
They missed Arjuna,
but busied themselves
studying, reciting, and sacrificing.

SECTION FIFTY-ONE

1 He heard
this marvellous, stirring account
(said Vaiśampāyana),
and his grieving mind

2 Was filled with anxiety;
a deep sadness overcome him
and, sighing heavily,
Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra said to Sañjaya:

3 "Charioteer, I don't have a moment's peace,
day or night,
when I recall my sons'
vicious gambling misdeeds,

4 And I contrast them
with the patience, bravery, fortitude,
and amazing mutual love
of the rich-in-prowess Pāṇḍavas.

5 The mahā-fortunate twin Pāṇḍavas
Nakula and Sahadeva are of divine birth,
and equal Devarāja-Indra in splendour;
they are invincible,

6 Their determination is inflexible,
their aim steady,
they shoot quickly, they are untiring,
dexterous, justly angered;

7 They are strong like lions,
as imposing as the Aśvins themselves.
If they attack,
led by Bhīma and Arjuna,

8 My soldiers, Sañjaya,
will be reduced to pulp.
I can see this. Those mahā-chariot-heroes
of divine birth

9 Will not show the least mercy
because they will recall
the gross insult to Draupadī.
The powerful Vṛṣṇi warriors

10 And the great Pāñcāla heroes,
and Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons,
protected by firm-in-truth Krishna,
will destroy my sons' armies.

11 O son of a charioteer,
I doubt if my soldiers
can repulse a Vṛṣṇi offensive
led by Balarāma and Krishna.

12 The brutal warrior Bhīma,
armed with uplifted mace,
will weave in and out of the ranks,
crushing his foes.

13 The kings supporting me
will not be able to withstand
the thunder-loud twang of the Gāṇḍīva-bow
and Bhīma's mace-attack.

14 Then I will recall
all the good advice of my friends,
which I ignored
in my fondness for Duryodhana."

15 "It was wrong, O rājā,"
replied Sañjaya,
"to let your fondness stop you
from preventing Duryodhana.

16 When Acyuta-Madhusūdana-Krishna
heard of the gambling defeat
of the Pāṇḍavas,
he hurried to the forest of Kāmyaka;

17 As did Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
heading the sons of Drupada,
and Virāta, Dhṛṣṭaketu,
and the mahā-chariot-hero Kekaya warriors.

18 O rājā, I was informed by spies
of what they discussed
after they met the defeated-at-dice
sons of Pāṇḍu.

19 The Pāṇḍavas approached Madhusūdana-Krishna
and appointed him
Phālguna-Arjuna's charioteer in battle;
and Hari-Krishna agreed.

20 Krishna saw the Pāṇḍavas
wearing black deerskin
and living in the forest;
upset, he said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

21 'I saw Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons prosperous
in Indraprastha
at the time of the hard-to-perform
Rājasūya yajña.

22 At the Rājasūya
I saw all the mighty kings –
of the Aṅgas and Baṅgas, Puṇḍras,
Oḍras, Colas, and Drāviḍas;

23 Rulers of the islands
and coastal territories,
and kings of frontier areas – Siṁhalas,
barbarian Mlecchas, Laṅkā-dwellers;

[III:51:24-32]

Transcreated by P. Lal

24 Hundreds of kings from the West,
chiefs of the west coast,
Pahlavas, Daradas, Kirātas
and the Yavanas and Śakas;

25 The Hārahūnas, Cīnas, Tuṣāras,
Saindhavas and Jāguḍas,
Rāmaṭhas and Muṇḍas,
and the women-ruled Taṅgaṇas;

26 The Kekayas, Mālavas,
and the rulers of Kāśmīra –
all of them, in awe of your power,
ready to serve you.

27 That brief glory
was deceitfully snatched by your enemies,
who now enjoy it; but I will kill them,
and restore it to you.

28 With the help of Balarāma,
Bhīma, Arjuna, and the twins,
and Akrūra, Gada,
Pradyumna and Āhuka,

29 With the help of heroic Dhṛṣṭadyumna
and Śiśupāla's son,
I will kill Duryodhana and Karṇa
in a single day,

30 Along with Duḥśāsana,
and Śakuni the son of Subala,
and all others
who dare to face us in battle;

31 And you and your brothers will again rule
in Hastināpura, O Yudhiṣṭhira.'
King Yudhiṣṭhira heard this,
and said to Krishna,

32 In the presence of the heroes,
among them Dhṛṣṭadyumna:
'Janārdana-Krishna,
I accept what you say as true.

33 Mahā-muscled hero,
promise me only this, Keśava:
you will kill my enemies and their followers
only after thirteen years elapse.

34 I gave my word to the rājās
in the sabhā
that I would live in the forest,
which I am now doing.'

35 Dhṛṣṭadyumna and the followers
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira did their best
to pacify agitated Keśava-Krishna
with gentle words.

36 In Vāsudeva-Krishna's hearing they said
to Pāñcālī-Draupadī,
'Devī, your wrath will be responsible
for Duryodhana's death.

37 Lovely-complexioned lady, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
we make this promise to you here –
so do not grieve.
The flesh of those

38 Who laughed and mocked you
when they won at dice
will be eaten by wolves and birds of prey.
Vultures and jackals

39 Will drink their blood.
Daughter of Pāñcāla, you will see
the bodies of those who dragged you
mangled and devoured by beasts.

40 Blood from the decapitated bodies of those
who mocked and insulted you
in the sabhā
will be drunk by the earth.'

41 O bull-brave Bharata!
The heroes said these words to Draupadī.
They were all shining men,
graced with war-scars.

42 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira extracted a promise
from these mahā-chariot heroes
that they would fight, led by Vāsudeva-Krishna,
after the thirteenth year ended.

43 Balarāma and Krishna,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna and Pradyumna,
Sāmba, Yuyudhāna and Bhīma,
the two sons of Mādrī,
the Kekayas and Pāñcālas,
and the rājā of Matsya –

44 Where is the man
who wishes to live
and dares fight these
lion-like heroes,
shining and brave,
on the field of battle?"

45 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"When they were gambling
Vidura said to me,
'The Pāṇḍavas may lose
the dice-game, but fearful doom
awaits all the Kauravas.'

46 Now, O charioteer,
I see what Kṣattā-Vidura meant.
After thirteen years,
a horrendous war
with the Pāṇḍavas, and doom
for the Kauravas."

SECTION FIFTY-TWO

1 "When Pṛthā-Kuntī's son mahā-ātmaned Arjuna
went searching for arms in Indra's realm,"
asked Janamejaya,
"what did Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers do?"

2 When mahā-ātmaned Pārtha-Arjuna went
to Śakra-Indra's realm for weapons,
they lived in the forest (answered Vaiśampāyana),
passing the time with their wife Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

3 The excellent Bharatas, sad at heart,
were sitting
with Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī one day
in a secluded, clean clearing.

4 Melancholy oppressed them;
their voices were choked with sorrow
because of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's absence;
waves of grief struck them.

5 Mahā-muscled Bhīma,
depressed by Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's departure
and the loss of their kingdom,
said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

6 "Mahārāja, bull-brave Bharata Arjuna,
on your advice, has left us.
On him we depended
for our very existence.

7 If Arjuna were to die, we, our sons,
the Pāñcālas, even Sātyaki,
and Vāsudeva-Krishna,
have little hope of survival.

8 What could be worse than the dharmātmā
dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna,
loaded with problems, sent away from us
under your express instructions?

9 Depending upon the tremendous prowess
of mahā-ātmaned Arjuna,
we took the deaths of our enemies
for granted.

10 If Arjuna were not there to stop me in the sabhā,
I would have despatched
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons and Śakuni
to the realm of death.

[III:52:11-19]

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11 Vāsudeva-Krishna is on our side,
mighty warriors help us.
Yet we controlled ourselves,
all because of you.

12 If we, with Krishna helping us,
were to kill our foes
who are instigated by Karṇa,
we could rule and enjoy the whole world.

13 We are brave men, but your weakness
for gambling has made us pitiable.
Meanwhile, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
goes on collecting tributes.

14 Mahārāja, it is important that we follow
the dharma of a Kṣatriya.
It is not a Kṣatriya's dharma, mahārāja,
to hide in the forest.

15 Ruling a kingdom is the primary dharma
of a Kṣatriya.
You know Kṣatriya-dharma,
you should not neglect it, O rājā.

16 O rājā! Let us call back Pārtha-Arjuna
and Janārdana-Krishna,
leave the forest, and kill the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
before twelve years pass.

17 Mahā-minded king,
mahārāja, lord of the earth,
I can despatch Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons to the other world
with my might.

18 I will kill all the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
as well as Śakuni and Karṇa
and all
who face me in battle.

19 And after I have killed them,
you can go and stay in the forest
as long as you like.
No one will blame us, O lord of the earth.

20 Subduer of foes,
even if we do something wrong, mahārāja,
we can perform various yajñas,
wipe off the blame, and obtain heaven.

21 O rājā! All this is possible,
if our rājā is not unwise and does not delay.
Everyone knows
you are brimming with dharma.

22 Crooked people and clever-in-crookedness people
deserve to be dealt with by crooked means.
That makes sense. What wrong is there
in using deceit to undo them?

23 O Bharata mahārāja,
those who know dharma say
that one day and one night
can be the equivalent of a year.

24 *Prabhu!* Lord! There is a text in the Vedas
that says
one year in a crisis
passes like one day, mahārāja.

25 O famed monarch!
Accept the authority of the Vedas,
and consider the thirteen years of exile over
after thirteen days.

26 Famed one! Now is the right time
to be rid of Duryodhana and his followers,
or he will dominate
the whole world, O rājā!

27 All this has happened, O Indra-among-rājās,
because you were addicted to gambling.
On top of that, we must pass
one year of exile unrecognised!

28 I cannot think of any country
where the wicked ātmaned
crafty Suyodhana-Duryodhana
will not be able to find us out.

29 And once he is able to trace us,
the rascal will demand
that we be banished for another exile
in the forest.

30 If that scoundrel meets us
after the thirteenth year,
he will make it a point to invite us
to another dice-game.

31 One more gambling-match,
O mahārāja!
Again you will not refuse,
again we will be exiled.

32 You are a novice at dice,
you become reckless when playing.
Mahārāja!
Once again we will be in the forest.

33 If, mahārāja, you do not wish
to make us suffer all our life,
take note
of the dharma of the Vedas,

34 Which clearly declares that the crooked
should be dealt with crookedly.
If you permit me,
I will go to Suyodhana-Duryodhana,

35 And with my śakti,
like wind-fanned fire consuming grass,
get rid of him.
Give me permission to do this."

36 Dharmārāja rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
affectionately smelt the head of Bhīma
and spoke to him gently
these words:

37 "You will, with the Gāṇḍīva-wielder's help,
O mahā-muscled one,
kill evil-minded Suyodhana-Duryodhana –
but after thirteen years.

38 As for your suggestion, Pārtha-Bhīma,
that the exile-period can be treated as over,
my lord, that is a lie,
and lies have no place in my heart.

39 Kaunteya-Bhīma, you will not need
the evil means of deceit
in order to kill Suyodhana-Duryodhana
and his followers. You are invincible."

40 While Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
was speaking to Bhīma,
there came to the forest
the mahā-fortune-favoured mahā-ṛṣi Bṛhadaśva.

41 Dharmātmā-Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
offered him a bowl of *madhuparka*
honey, curd, ghee, sugar and milk
with pūjā-respect as ordained in the śāstras.

42 After the ṛṣi had sat down,
mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira, with the bowl,
sat at his feet,
and said to him sadly:

43 "*Bhagavan*, revered one, tempted to gamble
by evil-minded
and scheming gamblers
I lost my wealth and kingdom.

44 I am a novice in dice.
The scoundrels cheated, I lost,
and they dragged my dearer-than-life wife
into the sabhā.

45 They defeated me a second time,
and exiled me to this fearful forest
where I live precariously,
dressed in deerskin.

46 I pass my days miserably
in the forest.
The harsh words that I heard
at the time of

47 The dice-game, my friends' words
on the humiliation –
I remember them clearly,
they make me restless at night.

48 I seem to be without a reason for living,
without mahā-ātmaned Arjuna,
the Gāṇḍīva-wielder
who protected all of us.

49 When will I see sweet-speaking, large-hearted,
dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu Arjuna again,
Arjuna, returning from heaven
with his hoard of arms?

50 Is there any rājā on earth
more miserable than me?
Have you heard of one, seen one?
I can think of none."

51 "Pāṇḍu's son, mahārāja," said Bṛhadaśva,
"you think there's no king
more miserable than you.
Let me tell you the story of one such.

52 Blameless one, I will tell you this story
if you want me to.
There was a rājā on this earth
who suffered more than you."

53 Rājā, Yudhiṣṭhira said to Bṛhadaśva:
"*Bhagavan*, revered one,
I am eager to hear the story of the rājā
whose sorrows exceeded mine."

54 "Rājā," said Bṛhadaśva,
"let me narrate the story
of the rājā whose grief
was greater than yours.

55 Among the Niṣadhas lived a prince
by the name of Vīrasena.
He had a son called Nala,
who knew dharma and artha.

56 His brother Puṣkara contrived
to defeat rājā Nala;
as a result he and his wife had to live
sorrowfully in the forest.

57 In the forest, O rājā,
Nala had neither servants nor chariots;
he had no brother and no friends
to console him.

58 But you have heroic brothers,
equal to the gods,
and the best Brahmins, equal to Brahmā.
You should not be sad."

59 "Excellent story-teller," Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"I am eager to hear the tale
of mahā-ātmaned Nala.
Tell me the story in detail."

SECTION FIFTY-THREE

1 The brave rājā Nala (said Bṛhadaśva)
was Virasena's son:
he was accomplished
handsome, an expert on horses.

2 Like the king of the gods,
he was the king of kings;
he shone like the sun
in super-excellent splendour.

3 He was lord of the Niṣadhas,
generous to Brahmins;
he was truthful;
he commanded an *akṣauhiṇī*
of cavalry, infantry, chariots and elephants.
He was fond of gambling.

4 Men and women thought highly of him:
he was a self-disciplined protector
of his subjects. He was a fine bowman;
he was like Manu.

5 Among the Vidarbhas,
there was a king named Bhīma
who resembled Nala in prowess and glory.
But he was childless.

6 He assiduously tried every means to get children.
One day, O Bharata-descendant,
a Brahma-ṛṣi named Damana
came to him.

7 O Indra-among rājās! Dharma-knowing
and progeny-desiring Bhīma and his wife
honoured that excellent guest
with offerings of deep respect.

8 Mahā-illustrious Damana was pleased,
and he gave the king and queen
the boon of a jewel-like daughter,
and three large-hearted sons.

9 The daughter was named Damayanti,
the sons Dama, Dānta, and Damana.
The sons were tremendously powerful
and pious.

10 It was lovely-waisted Damayantī, however,
who achieved world-wide fame
for her incandescent beauty, grace,
virtue and excellence.

11 When she grew up, hundreds of servant maids
and ornament-decked *sakhī*-attendants
waited on her,
as if on Indra's wife Śacī.

12 Bhīma's daughter glowed among her *sakhīs*:
she was faultless-featured;
with her ornaments she dazzled
like lightning in the sky.

13 A lady of impossible beauty!
Like large-eyed Śrī-Lakṣmī!
None among the gods or yakṣas
could equal her.

14 None among humans or others
ever possessed such beauty:
she soothed the eyes,
she was lovelier than a goddess.

15 And Nala was unparalleled
among tigers-among-men:
he resembled the god of love Kandarpa himself
in incarnated form.

16 Bewildered by their beauty,
heralds praised Nala before Damayantī,
and Damayantī before Nala,
the Niṣadha king,

17 With the result
that though they had not seen each other,
they fell in love, and the love,
O Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira, grew day by day.

18 Nala, unable to check his kāma any more,
disconsolately passed his time
in the gardens
attached to the palace.

19 One day he saw a flock
of golden-winged *haṁsa*-swans
roaming in the garden.
He managed to catch one.

20 The sky-coursing bird
said to Nala:
"O rājā, be merciful. Do not kill me.
I will do good to you.

21 I will go to Damayantī
and speak so beautifully of you,
O king of the Niṣadhas, that she desire
only you and none else."

22 The king freed the swan.
The swans swooped up,
wings wide-spread,
and flew to the kingdom of Vidarbha.

23 Arriving in the capital of Vidarbha,
the birds soared down
towards Damayantī,
who spotted them.

24 Damayantī and her *sakhīs*
were so fascinated
by these ravishing swans
that they wanted to catch them.

25 The swans scattered in all directions
in the pleasure garden;
and the girls chased them,
each girl after one swan.

26 The swan chased by Damayantī
flew into a corner of the garden,
and spoke to her
in a human voice:

27 "Damayantī, there's a prince of the Niṣadhas
named Nala,
as handsome as the Aśvins,
without equal among men;

28 As beautiful as the god of love Kandarpa
incarnated.
O ravishing lady,
if you were to marry him,

29 Your birth and beauty, slender-waisted one,
would find fruition.
For we have seen gods,
and gandharvas and men,

30 Nāgas and rākṣasas,
but never have we seen one like Nala.
You are a jewel among girls,
he a paragon among men.

31 The best meeting the best is excellent."
These were the words spoken by the swan,
O lord of the earth Yudhiṣṭhira,
to Damayantī,

32 Who replied, "Say the same to Nala."
The swan, saying "I will",
flew to Niṣadha,
and did as instructed.

SECTION FIFTY-FOUR

1 The words of the swan, O Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira
(Bṛhadaśva continued),
made Damayantī restless with longing
for Nala.

2 Damayantī was so stricken
with concern for his welfare
that she kept sighing heavily;
she grew pale and thin.

3 She would stare unseeingly upward,
as if in deep thought,
as if out of her senses:
love emaciated her.

4 Luxurious beds and couches
did not satisfy her.
She slept neither day nor night,
only sighed, *Hai! Hai!*

5 He *sakhīs* saw her
in that pitiful state,
and went and reported it
to the king of Vidarbha.

6 King Bhīma was seriously upset
by the news,
and kept asking himself
what could be the matter.

7 Try as he might,
he was unable to discover the cause
of his daughter's sadness
(continued Bṛhadaśva).

8 Because his daughter had reached maturity,
king Bhīma
made up his mind to arrange
a svayaṁvara for her.

9 He invited all the rulers of the earth,
saying, "O heroes,
the svayaṁvara ceremony of Damayantī
has been planned."

10 As soon as they received news
of the svayaṁvara,
the rulers of the world hurried
to the palace of Bhīma.

11 The earth reverberated
with the clatter of chariots,
the neighing of horses,
and the trumpeting of elephants.

12 The mahā-ātmaned, mahā-muscled rulers came
with shining retinues, wearing rich garlands.
Received with pūjā-respect,
they stayed in Bhīma's palace.

13 It was at this time
that the most excellent ṛṣis,
the shining, wise, and mahā-ātmaned
ascetic pair,

14 Nārada and Parvata, mahā-learned, mahā-vowed,
arrived in the realm of Devarāja-Indra.
They were cordially and respectfully
welcomed inside the palace.

15 Maghavat-Indra offered them
the traditional homage,
and enquired after their and the worlds'
welfare and peace.

16 "*Vibho*, Lord," said Nārada,
"peace is happily with us,
and peace also reigns supreme
in the world."

17 Indra, the slayer of Vṛtra and Bala,
asked, "Where are they –
the learned-in-dharma warrior-kings
who used to come to me? –

18 I do not find them here.
They are my favourite guests.
They are ready to lay down their lives
on the battlefield.

19 When the time is ripe,
they face death without retreating;
this Kāmadhuk, all-plentiful wish-fulfilling world
belongs to them, as much as it belongs to me."

20 "Maghavat, lord of heaven," said Nārada,
"let me explain
why the rulers of the world
are not present here.

21 The rājā of the Vidarbhas
has a daughter – Damayantī,
lovelier than the loveliest
of woman.

22 Her svayaṁvara, O Śakra-Indra,
is going to be held soon,
and rājās and sons of rājās
are hurrying there.

23 O slayer of Bala and Vṛtra,
each king is eager
to possess this exquisitely
lovely pearl for himself."

24 Even as Nārada was saying this,
the Lokapālas, guardians of the universe,
came to the palace
of Devarāja-Indra.

25 They heard Nārada
describe the svayaṁvara
and were so delighted
that they decided to go too.

26 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira! Riding their vehicles,
with hosts of attendants and servants,
they went to the kingdom
of Vidarbha.

27 Kaunteya Yudhiṣṭhira! High-thinking rājā Nala
also heard of the gathering of kings
and, dreaming of Damayantī's beauty,
set out for Vidarbha.

28 The gods saw Nala on the way
as they passed:
he looked like the god of love Manmatha,
gloriously personified.

29 The Lokapāla guardians of the world,
astonished by his sun-like radiance,
abandoned all hopes
of ever winning Damayantī.

30 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! They left their chariots,
descended from heaven, approached Nala,
and said
to the king of the Niṣadhas:

31 "O Niṣadha Indra-among-rājās, Nala,
you who are firm in the truth,
help us, O finest of men!
We appoint you our messenger."

SECTION FIFTY-FIVE

1 Nala promised the gods
(Bṛhadaśva continued)
to be their messenger; with folded palms
he offered them *añjali*-respect,

2 And asked, "Who are you?
Whose messenger must I be?
What else must I do?
I must know all this."

3 When the Niṣadha chief asked this,
Maghavat-Indra replied:
"We are gods;
we come here to win Damayantī.

4 King, I am Indra,
and this is Agni,
this is the lord of waters,
this is body-annihilating Yama.

5 Go to Damayantī,
tell her the Lokapāla world-guardians
led by Mahendra-Indra are coming
to the svayaṁvara in the sabhā.

6 Tell her: 'The gods Śakra-Indra,
Agni, Varuṇa, and Yama
want you for wife.
You must choose one of them'."

7 Nala listened to Indra, offered *añjali*,
and begged to be freed of his promise,
for he had come
for the same purpose.

8 "O mahā-gods, you must excuse me.
How can a man with the same desire
speak for it
on others' behalf?"

9 "Niṣadha king! You promised in advance,"
said the gods.
"Why all this prevarication now?
No delays. Go! Go now!"

10 The Niṣadha king,
addressed in this way, replied:
"How will I be able to enter
that heavily-guarded palace?"

11 Śakra-Indra said to him,
"We will arrange that."
"Very well," replied Nala,
and went to Damayantī's palace.

12 He saw the daughter
of the Vidarbha king there,
with her *sakhīs* –
a lustrous faultless-figured lady,

13 Slim-waisted, exquisite-eyed,
breathtakingly beautiful to look at,
shaming even the loveliness
of the moon.

14 Seeing the sweet-smiling princess,
Nala felt even more kāma for her,
but his mission made him
suppress his feelings.

15 When they saw the Niṣadha king,
the lovely high-born palace ladies
stood up,
he was so handsome.

16 They were so attracted and awed
that they burst into spontaneous praise;
they spoke nothing;
it was silent pūjā.

17 *Aho! What radiance! Aho! What handsomeness!*
Aho! What steadiness of mind!
What a mahātmā!
Is he a god, a yakṣa, a gandharva?

18 Overpowered by Nala's looks,
and because of their shyness,
those lovely ladies did not dare speak
or go near him.

19 Damayantī too was stirred;
but she smiled gently at Nala,
who smiled back.
She said to him:

20 "Who are you, O faultless one?
Great hero,
you stir such feelings in my heart.
How did you succeed in coming here?

21 Why have you come here?
How is it no one spotted you?
For this palace is heavily guarded,
by strict royal order."

22 Nala replied to the daughter
of the Vidarbha king:
"Fortune-favoured lady, my name is Nala.
I am the gods' messenger.

23 Śakra-Indra, Agni, Varuṇa and Yama
want you for wife.
Beautiful one, you must choose
one of them as your husband.

24 The gods arranged
to have me slip in unnoticed in the palace.
No one therefore
tried to prevent me.

25 Lady worthy of reverence,
the shining gods
have sent me on this mission.
You must now decide."

SECTION FIFTY-SIX

1 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
Damayanti namaskāra-ed the gods
and, smiling, said to Nala,
"Rājā, what do you wish?

2 Myself, and all that I have
are yours.
Accept them, my lord,
and give me your love.

3 The words of the swans
are burning my heart, my lord.
I called the rājās here
because I wanted you here.

[III:56:4-12]

Transcreated by P. Lal

4 O gives of respect whose respect is due!
If you spurn me
who am so devoted to you,
I will poison or burn
or drown
or hang myself."

5 Nala said to the daughter
of the Vidarbha king,
"How is it that you prefer a mortal
to the Lokapāla world-guardians?

6 Let your affection go
to the mahā-ātmaned gods,
creators of the universe;
I am not equal to the dust of their feet.

7 Mortals who offend the gods
run the risk of death.
Save me by choosing one among them
as your husband.

8 The gods will give you
the softest of dressess,
multi-coloured garlands,
and expensive ornaments.

9 Is there any woman in the world
who will refuse Agni for husband –
world-shrivelling,
world-consuming Hutāśa-Agni?

10 Is there any who will refuse
for husband Yama,
the dread of whose rod pushes men
into the path of dharma?

11 Is there any who will refuse Mahendra-Indra,
lord of the gods, a dharmātma,
a mahātmā,
destroyer of Daitya and Dānava antigods?

12 If you have secret feelings in your heart
for Varuṇa,
express them now.
This is the best advice I can give."

13 When she heard the Niṣadha king
speak in this way,
Damayantī's eyes filled with tears.
She said to him:

14 "Ruler of the earth,
the truth is this:
I namaskāra the gods,
but I choose you for husband."

15 She trembled as she said this, hands folded in *añjali.*
Rājā Nala, messenger of the gods,
with folded palms said, "Gracious one,
fortune-favoured one, do what is best.

16 I have promised the gods,
I come to speak on their behalf;
how can I seek
my own interest now?

17 If dharma can go together with self-interest,
some means may be found.
Gracious lady,
act on that principle."

18 Damayantī's tears choked her words,
but she smiled,
and courageously
she said to rājā Nala:

19 "Finest among men,
there is one blameless course I can think of.
If that is followed,
no wrong will be done.

20 You, my lord, and all the gods
led by Indra
should all come together
to my svayaṁvara.

21 O tiger-among-men! It will be easy for me to choose
you as my husband
at the time of the svayaṁvara.
Nothing wrong in this, O lord of men."

22 Rājā Nala heard these words
of the Vidarbha king's daughter,
and returned to the house
where the gods were staying.

23 The guardians of the world,
all mahā-lords,
asked him what happened
in the course of his mission.

24 "Did you see Damayantī,
the sweet-smiling one?
Faultless king, tell us in detail
what took place."

25 "As you instructed," replied Nala,
"I entered the many-chambered palace
of Damayantī,
guarded by mace-holding sentinels.

26 Because of your protection,
no one was able to spot me –
I went straight
to the king's daughter.

27 Her *sakhīs* saw me,
and I saw them too.
O mighty gods, they were struck
with extreme wonder.

28 Excellent gods, I spoke highly of you,
but the lovely lady decided
to choose me
as her husband.

29 'Tiger among men,' she said,
'I would like all the gods
to come with you
to my svayaṁvara.

30 Niṣadha king, at that time
I will choose you for my husband.
O mahā-muscled one!
I do not see anything wrong in this.

31 O excellent gods, that is all.
I have told you everything.
It is now up to you
to decide finally."

SECTION FIFTY-SEVEN

1 On the auspicious hour
of the lunar round,
rājā Bhīma invited all kings
to the svayaṁvara.

2 So great was the passion of the kings
for Damayantī
that they hurried to the svayaṁvara
as fast as they could.

3 They set foot inside a magnificent
golden-pillared pavilion with splendid gates,
like mahā-lions
entering mountain-caves.

4 All the fragrant-garlanded, heavily-ornamented
rulers of the world
took their seats.
Their ear-gems glittered.

5 That impressive gathering of kings
comprised the finest men,
just as Bhogavatī has Nāgas,
and mountain caves have tigers.

6 Their muscled arms looked like maces;
they were smooth
and glistening and symmetrical,
like five-headed snakes.

7 They had sharp noses, wide brows,
thick hair;
their faces seemed to shine
like so many stars in the sky.

8 Lovely-faced Damayantī
entered the pavilion,
and the eyes and hearts of the kings
were drawn towards her.

9 The mahā-ātmaned kings looked,
and their eyes remained transfixed
on whichever part of her body
first attracted them.

10 The names of the kings were then announced,
O Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira.
Damayantī looked,
and saw five identical men.

11 The Vidarbha king's daughter
saw five identical forms
and, perplexed, could not tell
which was Nala.

12 Each of them looked like king Nala;
whoever she looked at, was Nala;
the lovely lady pondered briefly,
asking herself,

13 *How will I be able to tell Nala*
from the gods?
This disturbed her so deeply
that grief overcame her.

14 But she recalled what she had heard
about the characteristics of gods –
Old men once told me
that the marks of the gods

15 *Can never be seen*
on any of the earth's creatures –
and she kept thinking of this
over and over again,

16 And decided finally to seek help
from the gods themselves.
She namaskāra-ed
the assembly,

17 And, trembling with fear, in *prāñjali*, said:
"The words of the swans
made me choose the prince of the Niṣadhas
as my husband.

18 In speech and in thought,
I am devoted to him.
That is the truth; therefore, O gods,
point him out to me.

19 The gods were the ones who settled
that he be my husband.
That is the truth; therefore, O gods,
point him out to me.

20 I have already commenced
my total dedication to Nala.
That is the truth; therefore, O gods,
point him out to me.

21 It is only right the mahā gods,
the Lokapāla guardians of the universe,
should assume their real forms,
and show Nala to me."

22 When the gods heard the piteous appeal
of Damayantī,
and realised the fervour of her love
for the Niṣadha king,

23 And the strength of her will, her bhakti,
the purity of her heart and her mind,
they did as asked,
and assumed their real forms.

24 She saw the gods without a drop of perspiration,
eyes unblinking,
wearing spotless garlands,
sitting without touching the ground.

25 She saw Nala and his shadow;
he was perspiring,
his garlands were dusty,
he sat on the ground; he blinked.

26 She saw the gods and Puṇyaśloka-Nala.
And Bhīma's daughter,
keeping her vow, choose the Niṣadha prince
as her husband.

27 Large-eyed, shy Damayantī
held one end of her dress,
and placed a lovely garland
round Nala's neck.

28 In this way Damayantī choose him
for her husband.
All the kings assembled there
moaned *Hai! Hai!*

29 But the gods and mahā-ṛṣis shouted
Sādhu! Sādhu! Excellent! Excellent!
and burst into applause
for Nala.

30 Vīrasena's son, king Nala,
his heart full of happiness,
spoke gently
to lovely-thighed Damayantī:

31 "You have rejected the gods,
and chosen a mortal.
Gracious lady, I will be
your always-obedient husband.

32 Sweet-smiling lady,
I promise you this:
so long as there is life in my body,
I will be yours."

33 Damayantī also showed similar respect
to Nala.
Both were pleased with each other.
In the presence of Agni

34 And the other gods,
they received their blessings;
mentally they offered their obeisance
to the mahā-illustrious gods present,

35 Who, pleased by their reverence,
gave Nala eight boons.
"You will excel in yajña,
and attain the highest,"

36 Was Śaci-pati Indra's boon to Nala.
"Wherever you will be,
whenever you will need me,
I will come to you,"

37 Was Hutāśana-Agni's; he added,
"You will attain my realm."
Yama gave him exquisite taste in food,
and firmness in dharma.

38 The god of waters Varuṇa gave Nala
the boon of his presence when needed,
and super-fragrant garlands.
Each god gave two boons.

39 Having given the boons,
the gods returned to heaven.
The kings who had assembled
were astonished by the incidents

40 At Damayantī's svayaṁvara;
awe-struck, they returned to their palaces.
After they had left,
mahā-minded Bhīma

41 Celebrated the wedding-rituals
of Nala and Damayantī.
Nala spent many happy days
in the kingdom of Bhīma;

42 Then, taking Bhīma's permission,
he returned to his capital.
The fortune-favoured king Nala
enjoyed his gem-like queen

43 As Indra, slayer of Bala and Vṛtra,
enjoys Śacī.
Heroic Nala, who shone
with the splendour of the sun,

44 Ruled his subjects
according to the dictates of dharma.
Like Yayāti, the son of Nahuṣa,
king Nala performed

45 The Horse-Sacrifice and other major yajñas.
Like a god,
he passed his days
in the pleasure-giving company

46 Of his wife Damayantī
in the palace-gardens and woods.
A son named Indrasena
and a daughter named Indrasenā
were born to shining Damayantī,
queen of mahā-minded Nala.

47 The ruler of the world, foremost of men,
Nala passed his days
in joy and prosperity.
performing many yajñas.

SECTION FIFTY-EIGHT

1 The Lokapāla guardians of the world,
returning to their abodes,
were met on their way
by Dvāpara accompanied by Kali.

2 Seeing Kali-Yuga,
Indra, slayer of Bala and Vṛtra, asked:
"Kali, where are you going,
accompanied by Dvapara?"

3 "To the svayaṁvara of Damayantī, O Śakra-Indra,"
replied Kali.
"I want to make her my wife;
my heart is enraptured by her."

4 Indra smiled and said, "Kali,
the svayaṁvara is over.
Rājā Nala was chosen by her:
we witnessed the ceremony."

5 Kali heard Śakra-Indra say this
(continued Bṛhadaśva)
and could not control his temper;
he shouted before the gods:

6 "She dared to reject the gods,
and choose a mortal!
It is right that she be punished
for this impudence!"

7 The gods replied to Kali Yuga:
"It is only with our consent
that Nala was chosen
by Damayantī.

8 Nala has all the virtues.
Which girl can refuse him?
He knows all the ways of dharma,
he keeps strict vows,

9 Is a scholar in the four Vedas
as well as the fifth;
he gratifies the gods by yajñas
performed in his house;
he follows ahiṁsā, speaks the truth,
and is firm in promise;

10 He is honoured for his forgiveness,
self-control, knowledge, and patience;
his glorious majesty is like that
of the guardians of the world.

11 Kali, only a foolish man
would dare to curse Nala;
he would only be cursing himself,
and harming himself.

12 The man who thinks of casting a curse
on virtue-loaded Nala,
will drown in the unplumbed,
agonising lake of hell."
Warning Dvāpara and Kali,
the gods left.

13 After they had gone,
Kali said to Dvāpara,
"Dvāpara, my anger is uncontrollable;
I will possess Nala,

14 And dispossess him of his kingdom.
He will no more have fun
with Bhīma's daughter.
Come, enter the dice; help me."

SECTION FIFTY-NINE

1 Kali schemed this with Dvāpara
and hurried
to the land of the Niṣadha rājā
(continued Bṛhadaśva).

2 He stayed in the country of the Niṣadhas
intent on discovering a fault in Nala.
He found one
after the twelfth year.

3 After passing urine,
Nala one day performed
his evening *saṁdhyā*-worship
without first washing his feet.
This was the occasion for Kali
to possess him.

4 He entered into Nala's body.
Next, he went to Puṣkara and said,
"Come,
play a dice-game with Nala.

5 I will help you to win.
You will defeat Nala,
and win his kingdom,
and enjoy all its luxuries."

6 Puṣkara rose and went to Nala.
Kali transformed himself
into the principal dice
to be cast at the game.

7 Foe-chastising Puṣkara approached
war-expert Nala
and insistently kept inviting him
to a dice-game,

8 Till the mahā-minded rājā could no longer refuse.
He arranged it so
that Damayantī would be present
at the time of the game.

9 Possessed by Kali,
king Nala kept losing –
his gold and silver statues,
his chariots, his dresses.

10 The celestial subduer-of-enemies
was so obsessed
that not even his friends could prevent him
from playing on.

11 All the citizens of the capital
and his ministers came
to see the harried rājā,
and tried to stop him from gambling.

12 The charioteer approached Damayantī
and said, "Devī,
the citizens and court officials
are waiting at the gate.

13 Inform the king that his citizens are here,
because they are unable to endure
the humiliation
of their dharma-and-artha-knowing rājā."

14 Bhīma's daughter Damayantī,
overcome by fear and sorrow,
said to the Niṣadha king
in a grief-choked voice:

15 "O rājā, your loyal citizens
and your ministers, full of rājā-bhakti,
are waiting at the gate
in order to meet you."

16 She kept repeating these words.
The lovely grief-stricken queen
continued to speak
her sorrow

17 To the uncaring rājā whose mind,
possessed by Kali,
thought only of the dice-game.
Ashamed, the citizens and ministers,

18 Muttering, *He is finished,*
returned to their homes.
Puṣkara and Nala gambled on
for several months,
O Yudhiṣṭhira, Nala always losing
(continued Bṛhadaśva).

SECTION SIXTY

1 Damayantī saw the fulsomely-famed
noble-minded king obsessed with gambling,
and seemingly bereft
of his reason.

2 Afraid and ashamed,
the daughter of king Bhīma
began thinking of the consequences
of the dice-game.

3 She could see Nala losing,
one by one,
all his possessions;
she wanted to avert the calamity,

4 So she called her chief nurse and attendant –
a respected, good-intentioned,
close-to-her-heart, soft-speaking woman –
and said.

5 "Bṛhatsenā, go to the ministers
of king Nala
and give them an account of what is lost,
and what still remains."

6 The ministers were informed,
and, muttering *O the misfortune that's on us!*
they hurried again
to meet Nala.

7 When Bhīma's daughter Damayantī
went again to Nala with the news
that his subjects had come to him,
he kept silent.

8 Humiliated because her husband
did not even reply to her,
Damayantī returned
to her inner apartments.

9 When information reached her
that Nala was going on
losing all his possessions,
she said to her nurse:

10 ""Bṛhatsenā, go and summon
the charioteer Vārṣṇeya
in the name of the king.
Good woman! It is urgent and serious."

11 Following Damayantī's instructions,
Bṛhatsenā sent trusted servants
to escort Vārṣṇeya
to the inner room.

12 Bhīma's daughter Damayantī, spotlessly pure,
always serene and poised,
said to Vārṣṇeya
these sweet and proper words:

13 "You know how your rājā
has always treated you.
It is your duty now to remember this
and help him.

14 Puṣkara keeps on winning.
The more my husband loses,
the more determined he is
to play further.

15 The dice fall always
in favour of Puṣkara:
king Nala is clearly out of luck
in this dice-game.

16 Engrossed in the game,
he is deaf
to all pleas and suggestions
from good friends and relatives.

17 How can I blame the mahā-ātmaned rājā
for not listening to advice!
He is so engrossed that nothing
enters his ears.

18 Charioteer, I need your help.
Follow my orders.
My mind to filled with fear.
Nala is in danger.

19 Yoke Nala's favourite mind-swift horses,
take my twin children
in the chariot,
and rush to the city of Kuṇḍina.

20 Place my children, the chariot,
and the horses
in the custody of my relatives; and stay there,
or go where you wish."

21 Vārṣṇeya, charioteer of Nala,
repeated Damayantī's orders
in full detail
to the chief advisers of Nala.

22 After they had discussed them,
he took their permission and,
taking with him the children in the chariot,
he hurried to Vidarbha.

23 There he left the horses,
the excellent chariot,
the boy Indrasenā
and the girl Indrasenā,

24 And, paying obeisance to rājā Bhīma,
filled with sorrow for king Nala,
he left that place
and went to Ayodhyā.

25 He went to rājā Ṛtuparṇa of Ayodhyā
with a heavy heart,
and took an appointment
as charioteer of that king.

SECTION SIXTY-ONE

1 After Vārṣṇeya's departure,
Nala lost his kingdom (continued Bṛhadaśva)
and whatever wealth he possessed
to Puṣkara.

2 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! Puṣkara said
with a smile to kingdom-bereft Nala:
"Let's start a new game –
what will you stake now?

3 You have Damayantī left –
all else I have won.
Well, what about it –
how about staking Damayantī?"

4 Holy-renowned Nala felt
as if his heart would break
when Puṣkara spoke these words.
He did not say a word.

5 Mahā-famed Nala looked painfully
at Puṣkara,
and began removing all the ornaments
that graced his body.

6 He was left with a single piece of cloth;
his friends saw him and suffered;
the rājā left all his wealth
and went out.

7 Damayantī, dressed in a single cloth,
followed him.
They spent three nights together
outside the town limits.

8 In the meantime, O Yudhiṣṭhira,
Puṣkara announced that anyone
offering hospitality to Nala
would be punished.

9 The result of the proclamation
was that no citizen
dared to be kind to rājā-Nala,
knowing Puṣkara's malice.

10 Worthy-of-respect-yet-unrespected Nala
passed three nights
outside the gates of the city,
living solely on water.

11 Hunger oppressed him,
and the rājā moved further out
in the hope of finding roots and fruits.
Damayantī followed.

12 Many days passed;
hunger became a great pain.
One day Nala saw some birds
with golden feathers.

13 The great ruler of the Niṣadhas
thought:
Their flesh will be my food,
their feathers my wealth.

14 He flung his robe on them.
They rose suddenly into the sky,
taking Nala's dress
with them.

15 The sky-roamers saw him
depressed and naked,
sitting in his chariot, head bent,
and said to him:

16 “Fool! We are not birds, we are the dice –
    you wearing
a dress gave us no pleasure,
    we came to steal it.”

17 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! Holy-famed Nala
    saw the dice fly away leaving him naked;
he turned to Damayantī
    and said:

18 “Blameless one,
    they were the cause of my loss of fortune,
my hunger-affliction,
    they were the reason the citizens

19 Ignored me. O gentle lady,
    look, these birds are the dice,
flying away with my dress –
    they were the cause!

20 What a terrible misfortune has overtaken me –
    my senses seem numbed.
Listen to me:
    I speak for your welfare.

21 These roads in front of you
    lead into Avanti
and, beyond the Ṛkṣavat range,
    into the deep south.

22 There are the mahā-Vindhya hills,
    there the sea-seeking river Payoṣṇi,
there the āśramas of mahā-ṛṣis,
    full of roots and fruits.

23 This road here goes to Vidarbha,
    and this
to the land of the Kosalas;
    beyond are the southern regions.”

24 Great Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira, sorrowing rājā Nala
    kept repeating these words carefully
to Damayantī,
    daughter of Bhīma.

25 Her voice thick with sorrow
and the mist of tears,
Damayantī said to Nala
in trembling tones:

26 "Lord of the earth,
the more I think of what I am thinking,
the more I tremble
and feel faint.

27 How can I even think
of leaving you
forlorn and destitute in this forest,
naked and weary and hungry?

28 Mahārāja, let me rather be with you
to console you
when, tired and hungry,
you recall your days of happiness.

29 What medicine is there for misery
more healing than a wife?
This is the truth;
all doctors are agreed on it."

30 "Lovely-waisted one, Damayantī,"
replied Nala, "what you say is true;
to a suffering man
a wife is the best friend, the best doctor.

31 Gentle wife, I do not intend to leave you;
blameless one,
I would rather part from myself
than part from you."

32 "Mahārāja," said Damayantī,
"if you do not intend to leave me,
why point out the road
that leads to Vidarbha?

33 I know, my lord,
that you regard me highly,
but your mind-unsettling misfortune
may make you desert me.

34 Lord of men,
you keep showing me the roads –
in this way you only succeed
in adding to my sorrow.

35 If it pleases you
that I return to my kinsmen,
then let us both go
to the kingdom of Vidarbha.

36 O giver of respect where respect is due,
the rājā of Vidarbha will honour you.
Receiving his respect,
you will live happily in our palace, O rājā."

SECTION SIXTY-TWO

1 "True," said Nala, "your father's kingdom
is like my own.
But I cannot go there
in my humiliated condition.

2 There was a time
when I went there prosperous,
and added to your joy.
Why add to your sorrow by going there now?"

3 Rājā Nala kept repeating this
to gracious Damayantī,
trying to console her,
now clothed in half of her dress.

4 Both draped
in Damayantī's single dress,
they wandered, arriving at last exhausted
at a rest-house.

5 The rājā of the Niṣadhas
squatted on the floor
of the rest-house
along with the Vidarbha king's daughter.

6 Dust-smeared, unsightly, smelly,
deprived of his dress,
his stretched himself out on the floor,
utterly tired.

7 Familiar-with-fortune Damayantī,
gentle and innocent and disciplined Damayantī,
unable to control herself,
fell deeply asleep.

8 Rājā Nala saw her sleeping,
and was so afflicted with grief
that, however hard he tried,
he could not sleep.

9 He kept revolving in his mind
the loss of his kingdom,
the coldness of his friends,
and the miseries in the forest.

10 *What will happen if I do this –*
what if I don't?
Which is better now –
death, or deserting my wife?

11 *Because she follows me,*
she bears all these hardships.
If I leave her,
she will probably go to her parents . . .

12 *If she remains with me,*
she will suffer more;
if I leave her, it is possible
she will find some happiness . . .

13 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! He argued with himself
in this way for a long time,
and finally decided that deserting her
was the best course.

14 *This mahā-fortune-favoured lady has nothing to fear*
from anyone,
for she shines in her virtue and nobility
and her bhakti for me

15 Under the influence of Kali,
having decided to forsake her,
he stopped thinking of Damayantī
altogether.

16 Realising that he was wearing nothing,
and seeing her
dressed in her single cloth,
he began looking right and left.

17 *I'll have to cut off a piece*
without waking her.
With that in his mind,
he began looking right and left.

18 After he had searched everywhere
in the rest-house,
he saw a fine unsheathed sword
in one corner.

19 The foe-chastising king
cut off half of her dress, wore it,
and, leaving the Vidarbha princess sleeping,
ran away.

20 But his heart was pulled towards her;
he hurried back;
he found her still sleeping;
tears came to his eyes.

21 *My beloved wife,*
so shy the sun and the wind hardly saw her,
now lies helpless
on the floor of this rest-houses!

22 *What will she do,*
sweet-smiling lovely-thighed Damayantī,
when she wakes and sees herself
half-clothed, like a madwoman?

23 *How will gracious Damayantī,*
daughter of king Bhīma,
survive alone
in the beast-and-snake-infested forest?

24 *O mahā-favoured-of-fortune lady!*
May the Ādityas, Vasus, Rudras,
and twin Aśvins protect you!
May your dharma protect you!

25 His senses clouded by Kali,
rājā Nala whispered these words
to his matchlessly lovely wife,
and made as if to go.

26 He moved away; turned back; moved away again,
and returned again;
dragged away by Kali, and dragged back
by his love for his wife.

27 It seemed that his heart was cut in two;
it moved back and forth,
to and from the rest-house,
like a swing.

28 Until, overpowered by Kali,
Nala ran away,
leaving his sleeping wife behind,
shouting and lamenting for her.

29 Kali took over his reason.
His heart was full of sadness,
but he left her alone
in that lonely forest.

SECTION SIXTY-THREE

1 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira (Bṛhadaśva continued)
after Nala had left,
lovely-thighed Damayantī woke up
alone in that forest.

2 Terrified because she could not see
her husband anywhere,
she shouted for him,
"Mahārāja! Mahārāja!

3 Hai! My lord! Hai! My husband! Hai Svāmī!
Why have you left me?
Hai! I am doomed!
I am afraid in this lonely forest!

4 Mahārāja, you are a man of dharma,
a man of truth.
How could you break your promise,
and leave me alone here?

5 What harm did I do you?
Others did you harm, not I.
How could you desert
a devoted and innocent wife?

6 Lord of men, the least you could do
was honour the vows
you made before
the illustrious Lokapālas.

7 O bull-brave hero! It is only because we do not die
until the allotted time of our death,
that your faithful wife
continues to live.

8 O bull-brave hero, this must be a joke
you are playing on me.
My lord, where are you?
I am afraid.

9 I see you, I see you! O rājā!
Ruler of the Niṣadhas,
I see you! – behind that bush!
Why don't you speak to me?

10 You are cruel, O Indra-among-rājās!
You see me suffer
and yet you will not come to me,
you will not console me.

11 I lament, not because I suffer,
I lament for nothing
except, my lord,
that I fear for your safety.

12 O rājā! In the evenings
when you are tired and thirsty
and exhausted after work,
how must you suffer without me."

13 In anger and deep grief
Damayanti said all this,
and began running aimlessly
and wailing loudly.

14 Sometimes she would stand erect,
then slump down;
sometimes she controlled herself,
sometimes sobbed openly.

15 Devoted and virtuous Damayantī,
under the impact of her terrible grief,
kept sighing heavily,
weeping and mumbling:

16 "May the person through whose curse
the king of the Niṣadhas
suffers like this,
suffer even greater woe!

17 May the scoundrel who has brought
pious-hearted Nala to this condition,
himself be reduced
to a far worse misery."

18 Sobbing, the wife of mahā-ātmaned Nala
wandered in the beast-infested forest,
searching
for her beloved Nala.

19 Continually sobbing,
she ran wildly everywhere,
like a mad woman, shouting,
"Hai! Hai! My lord!"

20 And as she ran, crying and lamenting
like a she-osprey,
giving vent
to her pitiful grief .

21 Over and over,
 a massive hungry snake attacked
the daughter of Bhīma
 and began to crush her.

22 Bursting with sorrow
 in the coils of the python,
she felt not so much for herself
 as for her husband's safety.

23 "Hai! Where are you, my lord?
 Why do you not save me
from this monstrous snake
 that devours me in the forest?

24 King of the Niṣadhas,
 when I am gone, how will you live?
My lord, how could you leave me alone
 in the forest?

25 When the curse is over
 and your senses return,
how will you live without me?
 Defectless one, lord of the Niṣadhas!
Tiger-among-rājās! who will console you
 when you are burdened with grief?"

26 A hunter, passing through that forest,
 heard the cries of Damayantī,
and ran to where
 she was lamenting.

27 He saw the large-eyed lovely Damayantī
 on the point
of being swallowed by the snake;
 The professional hunter,

28 With remarkable speed,
 brought his sword down
on the snake's mouth
 and sliced it in two.

29 He freed Damayantī,
 revived her with cool water,
and spoke reassuringly to her,
 asking if she needed food.

30 “Gazelle-eyed one,” he said,
“whose wife are you?
Why are you here? Lovely lady,
how did you fall victim to the snake?”

31 Great Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira (Bṛhadaśva said),
questioned by the hunter,
Damayantī gave him a detailed account
of all that had happened.

32 Seeing Damayantī dressed in a half-cloth,
seeing her heaving breasts,
graceful hips,
her full-moon face,

33 Her curved eyelashes
and her soft, pleasing way of speaking,
the hunter fell
under the spell of kāma.

34 He spoke to her gently,
seeming to comfort her.
But lovely Damayantī quickly guessed
his intentions.

35 Chaste and devoted Damayantī,
guessing his wicked motive,
blazed forth in the strength
of her pure anger.

36 Seeing her pure wrath reducing
the intensity of his lust,
the wicked hunter in desperation
tried to molest her.

37 Grief-stricken Damayantī,
without her husband and kingdom,
swelled with rage and,
when reason failed, cursed him:

38 “If I have ever
Even in thought
Loved anyone
But my husband,
Then may this wretch
Fall down dead!”

39 She had hardly pronounced these words
when the hunter
collapsed on the ground,
like a fire-stricken tree.

SECTION SIXTY-FOUR

1 Bṛhadaśva continued: Lotus-leaf-eyed Damayantī
having killed the hunter,
entered deeper that desolate
cricket-chirping forest,

2 Where lions, leopards, *ruru*-deer,
tigers, buffaloes, and bears roamed;
teeming with birds;
inhabited by robbers and strange tribes;

3 A forest of śāla, bamboo, *dhava*,
pipal, *tinduka, īṅguda,*
palāśa, arjuna, soapberry, *syandana*,
and *śālamala*;

4 Roseapple, mango, *lodhra,* catechu,
cane and minor śālas,
padmaka, *amala*, *plakṣa*, *kadamba*,
and *udumbara*;

5 The jujube, Bengal quince,
and the massive banyan, *priyāla*,
palmtree and date-tree, the *harītaka*,
and the *vibhītaka.*

6 Damayantī saw mountains
glittering with gems and minerals,
echoing with birdsong;
she saw enchanting valleys;

7 Rivers and lakes and ponds;
many species of birds and beasts,
and fierce looking snakes,
rākṣasas and *piśācas.*

8 Soothing pools, tanks,
and towering peaks on all sides;
flowing waters
and unbelievably beautiful waterfalls.

9 The daughter of the king of Vidarbha
saw herds
of buffalo, boar, and bear;
and many species of wild snake.

10 Lovely, dignified, strong-willed,
illustrious Damayantī
began her search for Nala
in that huge wilderness.

11 Worry over her husband's safety
and the shock of the forest's strangeness
removed all fear
from Damayantī's mind.

12 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! She sat down on a stone-slab;
afflicted with grief
and trembling with anxiety for her husband;
she sobbed:

13 "O broad-chested one! Long-armed,
mahā-muscled ruler of the Niṣadhas!
Where have you gone, O king,
leaving me alone here?

14 Hero! Lord among men!
Performer of the Aśvamedha Horse Sacrifice,
dispenser of large *dakṣiṇās*,
why did you deceive me?

15 Foremost of men! Auspicious, lustrously shining one!
Bull-brave lord of the earth!
You should have recalled
the promises you made me.

16 Ruler of the world!
You should have recalled
what the sky-roaming swans said to you
and also to me.

17 Tiger among men!
One vow well kept
equals all the four Vedas
and their branches and commentaries.

18 Slayer of your foes,
lord of men, brave hero!
You should at least fulfil the promise
made to me.

19 Hai! Nala! What will happen to me?
Does the fearful forest know I am yours?
I am doomed.
Why don't you answer, defectless one?

20 This massive-jawed, fearful beast-forest
is about to destroy me.
O save me,
my husband!

21 You used to say, 'I love you, and you alone.'
My gracious lord,
now is the time to prove
you meant what you said.

22 I am your loved wife, my lord;
why don't you answer me
who loves you and is loved by you,
and is now in distress?

23 Lord of the earth, foe-vanquisher,
look at me, O my large-eyed husband,
I am pale and thin
and sorrowing and helpless,

24 Weeping in the forest, in a tattered dress,
like a gentle gazelle
that has strayed from the herd,
O Ārya, O large-eyed respected one

25 Mahārājā! I, Damayantī, your loved wife,
forlorn in this mahā-forest,
and suffering, call for your help.
Why don't you answer?

26 Finest of men! I do not see you
anywhere on the mountain –
I find my noble-charactered,
handsome-bodied husband nowhere.

27 Where are you, O Niṣadha ruler,
in this mahā-frightening lion-and-tigered forest –
are you sitting somewhere,
or standing, or sleeping?

28 Foremost of men, increaser of my grief!
Are you here or somewhere else?
Who shall I ask?
Grief for you has exhausted me.

29 Who shall I ask, 'Have you seen Nala
anywhere in these worlds?'
Who shall I ask
about Nala lost in the forest?

30 'The graceful, mahā-ātmaned Nala,
lotus-leaf-eyed Nala,
foe-annihilating Nala, whom you seek,
is here,' –

31 From whose lips shall I hear
these sweet words?
Towards me slinks the king of the forest,
the four-toothed tiger,

32 The fierce-jawed lord.
Fearlessly I ask him,
"You are the lord of beasts,
the king of the forest.

33 I am Damayantī,
daughter of the rājā of Vidarbha
and wife of Nala of the Niṣadhas,
slayer of his foes.

34 O Indra-among-beasts, tell me –
a sorrow-stricken seeker of her husband –
have you seen Nala?
Have you news of him?

35 If, O lord of the forest,
you have no news of him,
then be kind and devour me, O lord of beasts,
and rid me of my misery."

36 He hears me lamenting like this,
and the uncaring lord of the forest
makes his way to the sweet waters
of the sea-seeking stream.

37 Meanwhile, let me ask
this mountain range
full of looming peaks
whose lofty loveliness meets the skies;

38 Which has sacred rocks, and metals,
and minerals, and gems;
it towers like colourful banners
above the huge forest.

39 It has lions, tigers, elephants,
boars, deer, bears;
it echoes with the lilting calls
of numerous birds;

40 *Kiṁśuka*, aśoka, and *vakula*,
punnaga and *karṇikāra*,
dhava and *plakṣa* and other flowering trees
make it so lovely;

41 It has rivers abounding in water fowl,
and enchanting high peaks.
From all of them
I will ask about Nala."

42 "Revered lord of hills," Damayantī said,
"loveliest, most enchanting of hills,
refuge, and auspicious pillar of the earth,
namastē!

43 I offer you my *praṇāmas*,
I am a rājā's daughter,
another rājā's daughter-in-law,
a rājā's wife, Damayantī.

44 King Bhīma of the Vidarbhas,
a mahā-chariot-hero lord of the earth,
protector of the four castes,
is my father.

45 He has performed the Rājasūya
and Aśvamedha yajñas
and distributed enormous *dakṣiṇā.*
He has large, piercing eyes,

46 Respects Brahmins,
is noble-natured, truth-speaking,
devoid of jealousy, brave, pure,
prosperous and acquainted with dharma.

47 Having defeated all his enemies,
he protects his subjects
with complete dedication. And I, O bhagavan,
revered ones, am his daughter.

48 My father-in-law, a lord of men,
was the mahārāja of the Niṣadhas.
His name was Vārṣṇeya,
of high fame.

49 Mahārāja Vārṣṇeya's son, a mighty hero,
handsome and truly valiant,
inherited the kingdom
and governed it excellently –

50 His name is Nala,
a famously-praised foe-vanquisher,
respectful to Brāhmins, learned in the Vedas,
eloquent, doer of good deeds,
drinker of *soma* juice,
and worshipper of Agni;

51 He has performed many yajñas,
given lavishly in charity,
he is strict in meting out justice.
I who stand before you
am his chief wife,
and I come to you helpless.

52 O finest of mountains,
fallen from prosperity,
separated from my husband, lonely and distressed,
I seek news of him.

53 O greatest of mountains,
have any of your hundreds of sky-touching peaks
seen Nala anywhere
in this fearful forest?

54 Have you seen anywhere my husband,
the invincible hero Nala,
energetic, long-armed, mahā-illustrious,
who has an elephant's gait?

55 You see me in this miserable,
half-conscious state, O incomparable hill –
why don't you treat me like your daughter
and console me?

56 Hero, knower of dharma,
truth-speaking lord of the earth!
If you are anywhere in the forest,
O rājā, reveal yourself to me.

57 When again will I hear the sweet words
of the royal mahā-ātmaned Nala,
that sound like rain-clouds
filled with nectar?

58 When again will I hear
the mahā-ātmaned rājā's voice call me
'Princess of the Vidarbhas' softly and clearly,
as prescribed in the Vedas?

59 When will my grief be soothed?
O my dharma-cherishing husband,
it is your duty to look after me.
I am in great sorrow."

60 Damayantī said these words
to the foremost of mountains,
and recommenced her quest
in the northern direction.

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61 After three days and three nights
 of wandering, the lovely-limbed lady
came to an exquisite garden-encircled
 hermits' retreat,

62 Where lived sages of the greatness
 of Vasiṣṭha, Bhṛgu and Atri,
spending their days
 in self-discipline and self-purification;

63 Some subsisted on air, some on water,
 some on leaves –
all seeking entrance to heaven
 by conquest of the senses.

64 Most of them wore bark-dress
 or deer-skin,
but all were dedicated to the goal
 of control of the senses.

65 All kinds of pet animals
 frolicked in the retreat,
including troops of monkeys.
 The sight comforted Damayantī.

66 Large-eyed
Black-eyed
Long-haired
Slim-waisted
Full-breasted
Soft eye-browed
White-toothed

67 Mahā-fortune-favoured
Dearly-loved
Damayantī
Wife of Vīrasena's son
Gem of a lady
Sorrowing Damayantī
Entered the āshram
Of holy ascetics.

68 She greeted the ascetics
 hoary with tapasyā
and stood humbly, silent.
 They said, "You are welcome, child."

69 The rich-in-tapasyā ascetics rose
and respectfully greeted her and said,
"You may sit down.
What is it that we can do for you?"

70 The lovely-thighed lady replied,
"Revered ones, immaculate ones,
your tapasyā, your *agnihotṛ*, your dharma,
your pet animals, –

71 O mahā-fortune-favoured ones,
are they prospering?"
They said, "Illustrious lady, auspicious one,
all of us are well.

72 Lovely-limbed lady, who are you,
what do you seek?
Your beauty and grace amaze us;
be comforted, do not grieve.

73 Are you a devī of this forest,
O lovely one,
or a goddess of this mountain or the river?
O favour us!"

74 She repled, "Tapasyā-rich Brahmins,
I am not a goddess of the mountain,
nor of the forest,
nor of the river.

75 I am the daughter of human parents,
O noble ones.
Let me tell you my story.
Listen to me carefully.

76 King Bhīma of the Vidarbhas,
ruler of the world –
I am his daughter,
O best of the twice-born.

77 The brave, always-victorious
lord of the Niṣadhas,
mahā-famous, immensely intelligent Nala –
I am his wife.

78 Large-eyed Nala,
whose face is like a full moon,
who shines with Devarāja-Indra's glory,
who vanquishes all enemies;

79 Who knows the Vedas, respects dharma,
is wise and truthful,
who protects the Niṣadhas,
destroys his foe's cities;

80 Who is devoted to worship of the gods,
who shows kindness to the pure-hearted –
is my husband,
He performs many yajñas,

81 He is learned in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas,
he routs his foes in battle,
he shines
like the sun and the moon.

82 This king of truth and dharma,
this ruler of the world
was challenged to a game of dice once
by scheming, ill-motived men,

83 Sharp in the art of gambling
and poor in goodness of heart.
They defeated him,
he lost his wealth and kingdom.

84 I am that bull-brave rājā's wife Damayantī.
My only aim in life now
is to get a glimpse
of my lost husband.

85 So I wander in all parts
of this dense forest,
I go to mountains, rivers, tanks,
vast stretches of water,

86 Carrying with me my secret sorrow,
searching for my husband,
the war-skilled master of weapons,
mahā-ātmaned Nala.

87 Have you seen the royal Nala
of the Niṣadhas anywhere?
It is him I seek in this grim,
dark, wild forest,

88 Where beasts of prey roam,
where tigers lurk.
It is for Nala that I have come
to your peaceful retreat.

89 For if I cannot in a few days
find my husband,
I will find relief
by leaving my body.

90 What is the use of living
if I am separated from my bull-brave lord?
How can I endlessly
go on grieving?"

91 The truth-seeing ascetics
heard Damayantī moan her fate
in this fashion,
and said to the daughter of Bhīma:

92 "Auspicious one! Fortune-favoured one!
You will indeed be happy.
The strength of our tapasyā tells us
you will find Nala.

93 Daughter of king Bhīma,
you will see your husband Nala,
finest of dharma-knowers,
bereft of all his miseries.

94 You will see him freed of blame,
richly adorned with gems,
ruling as he ruled in the past,
subduing his enemies,

95 Striking terror in his adversaries,
removing all the griefs
of his friends and allies,
crowned with every possible prosperity."

96 And having said this
to the dearly-loved queen of Nala,
the ascetics, their ritual *agnihotṛ*-fires,
and the āshram itself vanished.

97 Seductively lovely Damayantī,
daughter-in-law of Vārṣṇeya,
saw this strange phenomenon,
and marvelled.

98 *Was it a dream?* she thought.
What a weird experience!
Where are all the asceties?
Where is the āśrama?

99 *Where is the stream*
in whose holy waters
I saw waterfowl of all kinds? –
and the trees, flowers, and fruits?

100 Sweet-smiling Damayantī stood there
for a long time,
lost in amazement.
Her grief had made her pale.

101 She moved to another part of the forest;
there, under an aśoka tree,
she burst into tears,
grief choking her sobs.

102 The lovely aśoka was replete with flowers
and thick green leaves;
singing in it
were all manner of birds.

103 *Aho! This lovely tree in the middle of the forest,*
filled with fruit and flowers,
is radiant
like the shining king of mountains.

104 "O lovely Aśoka," she said,
"remove my grief, O graceful tree!
Have you seen Nala anywhere,
free from fear and pain?

105 Have you seen the dearly-loved husband
of Damayantī anywhere,
Nala, dearest to my heart,
foe-crushing king of the Niṣadhas,

106 Wearing half a piece of cloth,
soft-skinned Nala, once a great hero,
compelled by adversity
to hide in the forest?

107 O Aśoka, O Sorrow-Remover,
live up to your name
and send me away from here
cleansed of my grief."

108 The despairing daughter of Bhīma,
lovely lady Damayantī,
circled the aśoka tree respectfully,
and moved on.

109 In this new place she saw
many trees, many rivers, many hills,
and many species
of birds and animals.

110 In the course of her search for her husband,
Bhīma's daughter
came across caverns and ridges
and breathtakingly beautiful rivulets.

111 After a long time,
sweet-smiling Damayanti came across
a caravan of traders
with their elephants and horses,

112 Camping beside the waters
of a broad, soothing river.
In the cool, clear water
near the bamboo-overgrown banks,

113 Cranes and ospreys and *krauñcas*
flew and frolicked;
there were tortoises, fish and crocodiles,
and many small islands.

114 Seeing the crowd of people,
Nala's wife, illustrious Damayantī,
hurried towards them
and slipped into their midst.

115 She looked like a madwoman:
hair dusty,
wearing only half a piece of cloth,
lean and weak and pale.

116 Some of the caravan folk
fled in fear when they saw her,
some were disturbed,
others began to shout.

117 Some laughed, some swore at her,
some showed her kindness,
and some, O Bharata,
asked her questions.

118 "Who are you, good lady? and whose?
What are you looking for in this forest?
We are all upset seeing you.
Are you human?

119 Tell us the truth –
are you a goddess of the forest
or the hills or the four quarters?
If so, protect us, good lady.

120 Are you a yakṣī, a rākṣasī,
or a high-born lady?
Give us your grace,
O blameless one!

121 Good lady, grant that our caravan
depart soon from here
with auspicious signs,
and that all in it find prosperity."

122 Princess Damayantī heard the men
of the caravan address her,
and sorrow-stricken she replied to them
in these words:

123 "Leaders of the caravan!
Traders, young men, guides!
All who are members
of this grand caravan!

124 I am just a woman,
born of royal parents,
a king's daughter-in-law,
a wife, seeking a darshan of her husband.

125 The rājā of the Vidarbhas
is my father,
and Nala, rājā of the Niṣadhas, my husband:
I am looking for him.

126 Tell me, quickly,
have any of you
seen my dearly-loved husband Nala,
tiger among men, great foe-slayer?"

127 The leader of the caravan,
a man called Śuci,
said to lovely-bodied Damayantī,
"Lady, listen to me.

128 Sweet-smiling lady, I am a trader,
and the leader of this caravan.
Illustrious lady, I have not seen any man
by Nala's name.

129 All I have seen in this mahā-forest
is elephants,
leopards, buffaloes, tigers,
and other animals.

130 You are the only human being
I have come across in this forest.
The yakṣa-lord Maṇibhadra
has smiled on us today!"

131 Damayantī asked the merchant-leader
of the caravan,
"Tell me, sir, to which land
is your caravan bound?"

132 "We are on a trading mission,"
replied the leader,
"to the kingdom of Subāhu,
the truth-seeing Cedi rājā."

SECTION SIXTY-FIVE

1 The lovely lady (Bṛhadaśva continued),
in the hope
of finding her husband,
joined the caravan of traders.

2 Many days passed in crossing
that vast, terrifying forest,
and they finally arrived
near a large fragrant lotus-filled lake,

3 Rich with
enchanting grasses, reeds, fruits, flowers;
and all kinds of birds
nesting near it.

4 They tasted its water,
it was cool and delicious and soothing;
the leader of the caravan
decided to camp there.

5 The members of the caravan
spread out into the forest
during the day, and in the evening
returned to their camp.

6 At midnight, while they slept,
and total silence reigned,
a huge herd of elephants
passed by the spot

7 On its way to a mountain stream
to drink its water
mixed with their ichor;
they saw the traders and their elephants.

8 The wild herd, suddenly enraged,
rutting juices streaming
from their temples, rushed furiously
at the domesticated elephants.

9 They rushed with the violence and impact
of huge peaks
toppling on the ground –
the noise was deafening.

10 In front of them was the camp,
an obstacle to their headlong charge,
lying midway
between them and the lake.

11 They plunged straight on,
crushing the sleeping traders;
some traders woke and scattered,
screaming "Hai! Hai!"

12 Groggy with sleep,
they stumbled into the forest –
some were impaled on tusks, some trampled,
some smashed by trunks.

13 Many camels and horses
were also crushed;
some traders, fleeing in blind haste,
accidentally wounded their companions.

14 Shouting pathetically,
some traders collaped on the ground;
some clambered up trees,
and others tripped on jagged stones.

15 That is how, O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
misfortune overtook
the great caravan through no fault
of its members.

16 Everywhere shouts and screams,
shattering the three worlds.
Suddenly a fire broke out.
"Help!" "Don't leave me now!"

17 "Pick up those scattered gems!
Don't leave them behind!"
"Don't run away!" "Money's nothing!"
"Truly it isn't!"

18 "Don't give in to fear! Think!
Listen to me!"
These words pierced the air
as the traders panicked.

19 Damayantī, roused by the cries
of fear and pain,
woke up suddenly,
and gazed around her, aghast.

20 Lotus-leaf-eyed Damayantī
saw all around her
the chaotic carnage that seemed
to devastate the three worlds.

21 There was no one to help her.
Numb with fear,
she tried desperately to stand up,
Her breath came in gasps.

22 Those who had escaped the slaughter
now re-assembled
saying, "The fruits of our karma.
Perhaps we failed to offer pūjā

23 To the mahā-success-bestowing,
gracious lord of the yakśas, Maṇibhadra,
or the yakṣa-lord Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera,
the disaster-averting gods.

24 Perhaps this is the result
of the ill omens of the birds we saw.
Our stars are inauspicious.
Or why should this happen?"

25 Others, dismayed by the loss
of their friends and wealth,
said, "That weird-looking lunatic woman
who joined our party –

26 Who else but a she-demon
could have conceived
of this gruesome māyā of slaughter
and disaster?

27 She must be a rākṣasī or a yakṣī
or a fearful blood-drinking *piśācī*.
She is the cause
of this indiscriminate butchery.

28 If I get a chance to lay my hands
out that vicious she-demon,
I will stone her to death,
or choke her

29 With dust, or grass, or wood,
or beat her dead."
Damayantī heard these words;
in fear and shame,

30 She fled into the dense forest,
anxious for her life.
There she began finding fault with herself,
saying:

31 "Aho! The great Creator is angry with me,
that is why
I find no peace anywhere.
What wrong karma did I do?

32 I cannot recall having done anyone
any harm,
in action, thought, or speech.
What wrong karma did I do?

33 I have suffered so much!
It must be the result
of some heinous crime I committed
in my previous life.

34 My husband lost his kingdom,
his relatives humiliated him,
I am separated from him,
and from my son and daughter;

35 I roam helpless in the forest,
easy prey to ravenous beasts."
Next day, the survivors
of that grim slaughter

36 Left the forest and the country,
lamenting the deaths
of their fathers, brothers,
sons and relatives.

37 The princess of Vidarbha
kept lamenting,
"It must have been some horrible crime
I did in the past, as a result

38 Of which this caravan
was destroyed by the elephants.
And it seems that I am doomed
to suffer even more.

39 No one dies before his time.
I have heard old men say this.
If this were not true,
I would have been trampled too.

40 There is nothing in the human world
that is not pre-ordained.
I did nothing in childhood,
no crime did I commit

41 In thought, word, or deed
to deserve this horror.
At the time of the svayaṁvara
the illustrious Lokapāla world-guardians

42 Were ignored by me, because I chose Nala;
I think it is they
who have interfered
and kept him away from me."

43 Lovely-complexioned chaste Damayantī
continued in this manner
to proclaim her grief
in the sadness of speech.

44 O tiger-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira!
Her face looked drawn and pale,
like the autumnal moon. She joined
some Veda-knowing Brahmins who survived

45 The massacre, and in their company,
travelling speedily,
she arrived in the evening
at the Cedi rājā Subāhu's capital.

46 She was dressed in a half-cloth.
She had not bathed,
she looked frail and helpless,
her eyes were terror-stricken like a madwoman's.

47 The city urchins followed her,
and the citizens watched in amazement,
as she entered
the capital of the rājā

48 Of the Cedis.
Surrounded by a horde of curious urchins,
Damayantī stood
in front of the palace.

49 The queen-mother saw her
in the middle of that a crowd;
she summoned her nurse and said,
"Bring her to me.

50 They taunt her and mock her,
Poor girl, she needs shelter.
She radiates beauty,
she will light up the palace.

51 For indeed, the lovely large-eyed lady
looks like Śrī-Lakṣmī herself
disguised as a madwoman."
The nurse ordered the crowd

52 To disperse and, awe-struck,
asked Damayantī,
"How is it, in spite of your grief,
you look so lovely?

[III:65:53-61]

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53 You dazzle like lightning
in the midst of clouds.
Who are you – and whose?
Even unornamented you look like a goddess.

54 Though helpless, you do not seem
to fear your tormentors."
The daughter of king Bhīma
replied to the nurse:

55 "I am an ordinary woman,
devoted to my husband;
an upper-caste servant woman,
I go and stay where I like.

56 I am alone, I live on roots and fruits;
where night falls, I rest.
My lord is noble
and he loves me deeply.

57 I am his bhaktā,
and I followed him like a shadow.
One day, unfortunately,
he played a game of dice, lost everything,

58 And took refuge in a forest,
wearing a single cloth,
and deeply troubled.
I followed him, hoping to console him;

59 It so happened that one day
my heroic husband
for some reason
entered deep in that thick forest.

60 Hunger gnawed at him,
and grief unhinged his mind;
out of carelessness
he lost the cloth he was wearing.

61 Naked he roamed like a madman.
I followed him,
wearing my own single cloth,
unable to rest or sleep for many nights.

62 Once, while I slept,
he cut half of my dress;
and left me – I had done him no harm –
I search for him –

63 The dearest one of my heart,
my lotus-radiant lord,
my god, my heart's delight,
who is the equal of the gods."

64 Seeing Damayantī's eyes brim with tears,
and grief thicken her voice,
the queen-mother Rājamāta
said to her:

65 "Sweet lady, auspicious one,
stay with us here.
You have pleased me.
My servants will look for your husband.

66 Or it may so happen
that he will return by himself from the forest.
But stay here –
you will find your husband."

67 "Mother of heroes," said Damayantī,
touched by the queen-mother's words,
"I will live with you
but on three conditions –

68 One, I will not eat any leftovers;
two, I will not wash anyone's feet;
three, I will not speak
to any man.

69 If any man tries to possess me,
you will punish him;
if he persists, the punishment is death.
I have vowed this.

70 I will meet only those Brahmins
who go in search of my husband.
I am agreeable to staying
on these conditions.

71 If this cannot be,
I have no desire to live."
The queen-mother listened carefully,
and replied:

72 "I agree. Your vow is noble."
These were the words
with which the Rājamātā
granted Damayantī's request.

73 She called her daughter Sunandā
and said, "Sunandā,
this girl is a devī, she will now
be your attendant Sairindhrī.

74 She is about your age,
so treat her like a *sakhī*,
and play with her
without any reservation of any kind."

75 Sunanda joyfully accepted Damayantī
and, surrounded by her *sakhīs*,
led her
to the inner apartments.

76 Damayanti was moved by the pūjā-respect
given by Sunandā;
her conditions were met,
she stayed on in the palace.

SECTION SIXTY-SIX

1 Rājā Nala (continued Bṛhadaśva),
leaving Damayantī behind,
saw a fierce fire
blazing in the huge forest.

2 A voice came from the middle of that fire,
saying over and over again to Nala,
"Prefusely praised Puṇyaśloka Nala,
come here."

3 Nala shouted, "Don't be afraid,"
and rushed into the centre of the fire,
where he saw
the Nāga-rāja serpent-king lying coiled.

4 The Nāga king paid his respects to Nala
and, trembling, said,
"O rājā, I am a Nāga,
my name is Karkoṭaka.

5 Brahma-ṛṣi Nārada of mahā-tapasyā
whom I tricked while he was doing tapasyā,
was furious,
and he cursed me, saying:

6 *You will stay here transfixed*
until king Nala comes
and releases you by taking you
to some other place.

7 His curse makes me rooted to this spot.
Free me,
and I will tell you something
for your benefit.

8 There is no one like me
among the Nāgas;
and I will be your loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend.
I am light; pick me up, and run."

9 The Nāga-king said this
and shrunk himself to thumb-size.
Nala picked him up
and sped to safety.

10 They came to an open ground
where no fire raged.
Nala wanted to leave him there
but the Naga Karkoṭaka said:

11 "King of the Niṣadhas!
Count your steps as you go.
Mahā-muscled warrior,
I will do you a great service."

12 The king began counting his steps;
at the tenth step the snake stung him,
and he quickly changed
from fair skin to dark.

13 Nala was struck dumb with astonishment;
he saw the snake
also transformed
into the real Karkoṭaka.

14 Karkotaka said soothingly to Nala:
"I have changed
your original form
because you need to be disguised.

15 And the person who caused you
all your mahā-misery –
I have driven him with my fangs
inside your body.

16 There he will stay, mahārāja,
writhing and agonising inside you,
his body racked
by my bitter venom.

17 And so have I saved you, lord of men,
from the person who,
in anger or hate,
decided to put you in such misery.

18 Tiger-among-men, lord-of-men!
Never again need you fear fanged creatures,
or foes, or Veda-knowing Brahmins,
thanks to me.

19 Do not be agitated;
my venom will not affect you.
From now on, O Indra-among-rājās,
you will always be victorious in war.

20 Go, king of the Niṣadhas,
to king Ṛtuparṇa, an expert at dice,
and say
you are the charioteer Bāhuka.

21 Lord of the Niṣadhas! Go today itself
to the lovely city called Ayodhyā.
The rājā will exchange his dice-skill
for your horsemanship.

22 He belongs to the family of Ikṣvāku,
and he will be your friend.
With your dice-skill,
you will soon prosper.

23 I can tell you truly that you will find
your wife, son and daughter,
and recover your kingdom too.
Do not grieve.

24 Lord of men, when you wish
to regain your real complexion,
put on these clothes,
and think of me;

25 As soon as you wear these clothes,
you will recover your complexion."
The Nāga gave Nala
two pieces of fine cloth.

26 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! Having advised Nala,
and having handed him
the two pieces of celestial cloth,
the Naga rājā instantly vanished.

SECTION SIXTY-SEVEN

1 When the Nāga Karkoṭaka vanished
(continued Bṛhadaśva),
Nala went to Ṛtuparṇa's city
on the tenth day.

2 He introduced himself to the rājā
with these words:
"I am Bāhuka, who has no peer
in horsemanship.

3 I know about financial matters too;
I know the culinary arts well enough
to have no equals.
O Ṛtuparṇa,

4 I will teach you all the arts of the world,
and I will solve
any difficult problems you have.
I am at your service."

5 "Bāhuka, you are very welcome,"
Ṛtuparṇa said. "Stay with me.
I have one passion,
and that is fast driving.

6 Do all you can
to get the horses to run fast.
I put you in charge of my stables,
for ten thousand coins.

7 The two charioteers Vārṣṇeya and Jīvala
will be under you.
May your days here, O Bāhuka,
pass in happiness."

8 Nala, received in this way,
spent his days
with Vārṣṇeya and Jīvala
in the city of Ṛtuparṇa.

9 But his mind was filled with thoughts
of the daughter
of Vidarbha's rājā;
every evening he repeated this śloka:

10 *Where is the lovely one now,*
oppressed with hunger and thirst?
Does she think of wretched me at all,
or has she found another?

11 Once, when rājā Nala was whispering
this śloka at night,
Jīvala said, "Bāhuka,
who is this person you remember daily?

12 Long-lived one, who is this lady
whose absence moves you so?"
And Nala answered him,
saying, "Once a fool

13 Had a wife whose fame was known
far and wide.
He made big promises to her.
They were somehow separated,

14 And the ill-ātmaned wretch wandered about,
anguished, burning with sorrow,
unable to sleep
day or night.

15 He would remember her at night
and chant this śloka.
He wandered the world over,
and came to a place

16 Where he found rest.
There he remembered her.
He did not deserve his misfortune.
Indeed, his wife followed him,

17 And it was he who deserted her.
Who knows where she is, how she is?
She knew nothing
of the hardships of the forest;

18 She must be roaming about harassed,
hungry, thirsty,
in that fearful forest
where predators roam, poor woman."

19 After abandoning her in the forest,
this is how the foolish, unfortunate Niṣadha-rājā,
living disguised with Ṛtuparṇa,
remembered Damayantī.

SECTION SIXTY-EIGHT

1 Here Nala (said Bṛhadaśva),
deprived of his kingdom,
and his wife, now an attendant;
and there, king Bhīma assembled
a large body of Brahmins
to find Nala.

2 He gave them a vast sum of money
with instructions
to spare no pains
to discover Nala and Damayantī.

3 "To anyone who brings me news
of the whereabouts
of the Niṣadha king,
I will give one thousand cows;

4 And if he brings news of his wife also,
I will add cultivable fields,
and a village
as large as a city.

5 If Nala and his wife are brought here,
the reward
will be ten thousand cows."
With these instructions,

6 The Brahmins fanned out
in all directions,
but they were unable to get information
about Nala and Bhīma's daughters.

7 One Brāhmin, Sudeva, after a long search,
happened to see
the daughter of the Vidarbha rājā
in the Cedi captial;

8 She was sitting with Sunandā
in the king's palace
while the rājā was absorbed
in his morning meditations;
he caught just a glimpse of her,
her beauty still dazzled.

9 She was like a blazing fire
blurred by smoke.
She was large-eyed, she looked pale and weak,
but he knew,
after careful thought,
that it was none but Bhīma's daughter.

10 "I had seen her before,"
Sudeva thought, "she is the same.
My eyes are blessed seeing
the world-delighting Śrī-Lakṣmī.

11 She shines like the full moon,
this lovely full-breasted devī;
her radiance dispels
the darkness of the world.

12 He eyes are like lotus-leaves,
she is Manmatha-Kāma's Rati;
like the full moon,
she makes happy the three worlds.

13 Separated by ill-fortune
from the lake of Vidarbha,
she looks like a mud-stained,
transplanted lotus;

14 She looks like the nights of the full moon
swallowed by Rāhu.
Her grief has thinned her
like a dried-up river.

15 She looks now like a ravaged pond
whose lotuses
have been crushed by elephants,
whose birds have fled in fear.

16 Delicate yet full-fleshed,
worthy of begemmed palace-pleasures,
she now looks like a sun-scorched,
transplanted lotus stem.

17 Beautiful and well-endowed,
deserving of ornaments
though now without them,
she looks like the cloud-hidden crescent moon.

18 Without luxuries, without relatives and friends,
she lives on in silent anguish,
hoping for a darshan
of her husband again.

19 The finest ornament of a woman
who has no ornaments
is her husband; without him, though lovely,
she does not shine.

20 And Nala must be suffering too,
living without his dear wife.
How does he manage
to survive at all?

21 My heart is eager to get another glimpse
of the lotus-eyed black-haired lady
who deserves prosperity
yet suffers adversity.

22 The time will come when,
crossing the ocean of her grief,
she will sit beside her husband,
like Rohiṇī with the moon.

23 And the Niṣadha rājā too
will be happy regaining her,
as a monarch is happy recovering
his lost territories.

24 The Niṣadha rājā deserves
the Vidarbha daughter,
who matches him in conduct, age and birth;
she deserves him too.

25 It is my duty to comfort the wife
of immensely powerful and noble Nala,
for she is eager
for a darshan of her lord.

26 Let me go and comfort her,
this lady of full-moon beauty,
devoted to her husband
and suffering such deep anguish."

27 Sudeva the Brahmin (continued Bṛhadaśva)
recognised Damayantī
from her looks and gestures,
and approached her.

28 "Daughter of Vidarbha," he said,
"I am Sudeva,
your brother's friend.
Rājā Bhīma has sent me for you.

29 O Queen! Your father, mother and brothers
are well.
Your son and daughter are safe and well,
happy and peaceful.

30 Your friends and relatives are alive,
but like dead persons because of you;
hundreds of Brāhmins
are searching for you."

31 Yudhiṣṭhira (continued Bṛhadaśva),
Damayantī recognised Sudeva,
and asked him question after question
about her friends and relatives.

32 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! Her anguish brimmed over
at the unexpected appearance
of that excellent Brāhmin Sudeva,
a friend of her brother.

33 Sunandā saw her sitting in private
and sobbing
before a Brahmin;
she ran to her mother,

34 And said, "Mother,
Sairindhrī is crying away most piteously.
I thought I should tell you
about this."

35 The queen-mother of the Cedis
left her inner apartments
and hurried to the room
where Damayantī sat with the Brahmin.

36 She summoned Sudeva and asked:
"Who is this girl?
Whose wife is she? Whose daughter?
And how is it that

37 This lovely-eyed girl has been separated
from her husband and her relatives?
And you, Brahmin,
how do you know her?

38 Let me have the whole story.
I want to know all
about this goddess-like girl.
Tell me all you know."

39 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
Sudeva, ordered by the queen-mother,
relaxed and started giving in detail
the story of Damayantī's grief.

SECTION SIXTY-NINE

1 "The lovely lady," Sudeva said,
"is Damayantī,
daughter of the dharmātmā rājā
mahā-radiant Bhīma of Vidarbha.

2 This lovely lady Damayantī
is wife of the virtuous rājā Nala
of the Niṣadhas,
the son of Vārṣṇeya.

3 The world-ruler Nala was defeated at dice
by his brother,
his kingdom taken away;
he and Damayantī hid in the forest.

4 We have been searching for Damayantī
all over the world,
and have at last traced her
in the palace of your son.

5 There is no woman as lovely as her:
her beauty never fades.
She has a birthmark,
a beautiful one, between her eyebrows,

6 Resembling a lotus,
of whose existence I know;
it is now semi-visible,
because dust covers it,
like the moon hidden
behind a layer of cloud.

7 The Creator gave her that auspicious
between-eyebrows birthmark,
faintly seen now,
like the first day's crescent moon.

8 Dust covers her body,
but her beauty is radiant.
Her body is not properly washed,
still it shines like gold.

9 I could identify Damayantī devī
by her beauty and that birthmark,
as fire can be felt
by its heat."

10 Lord-of-the-earth Yudhiṣṭhira!
Sunandā heard the words of Sudeva,
and she rubbed off the dust
that covered the birthmark.

11 Damayantī's birthmark, cleared of dust,
emerged like the moon
when dark clouds
vanish from the sky.

12 Seeing the birthmark,
Sunandā and the queen-mother
begar to cry; they embraced Damayantī
affectionately, silently.

13 Sobbing and speaking slowly,
the queen-mother Rājamātā said,
"The birthmark proves it –
you are my sister's daughter.

14 Lovely one, I and your mother
are daughters
of the mahā-ātmaned monarch Sudāma,
ruler of Daśārṇa.

15 She was married to rājā Bhīma
I to Vīrabāhu.
I saw you when you were born
in the Daśārṇa palace.

16 Lovely lady, treat my house
as you would your father's.
Damayantī, consider my possessions
as your own."

17 Lord of the earth Yudhiṣṭhira!
Damayantī happily *praṇāma-ed* her aunt
and gratefully said to her
(Bṛhadaśva continued):

18 "Though you did not know me,
you made me happy here,
giving me all your affection
and all that I needed.

19 Nothing could be happier for me
than to stay on here,
but, mother, give me permission to leave,
for I live in exile.

20 My son and my daughter
live in my father's palace
and must be missing
their father and mother.

21 If you wish to help me,
order some means of conveyance
to take me
to the land of the Vidarbhas."

22 "And so I will!" said the queen-mother
and, obtaining the permission of her son,
she arranged
to have Damayantī sent

23 In a splendid palanquin,
guarded by soldiers,
and supplied with delicious food
and drink and clothes.

24 Damayanti left immediately
for Vidarbha
where her friends and relatives received her
with grateful praise.

25 She saw her son and daughter,
her relatives, father and mother
and all her *sakhīs*
who had come to welcome her;

26 And the goddess-like, illustrious devī Damayantī
gratefully offered pūjā-homage
to the gods and Brahmins
for her good fortune.

27 The king was overjoyed
to see his daughter return,
and rewarded Sudeva with money,
a village and one thousand cows.

28 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! After a full night
of peaceful rest in her father's palace,
the lovely lady Damayantī
said to her mother:

29 "Mother, the truth is this –
I cannot go on living
unless I have by my side
that hero of heroes, Nala."

30 Hearing Damayantī-devī's words,
her mother was touched,
and wept silently.
She did not say one word in reply.

31 All the women of the inner apartments
sighed *Hai! Hai!*
at Damayantī's misfortune,
and began to cry.

32 The queen went to mahārāja Bhīma
and said:
"Your daughter Damayantī
continues to grieve for her husband.

33 Forgetting all shame,
she dared to say
that we should send our men
to find out his whereabouts."

34 At his queen's urging, rājā Bhīma arranged
to have dependable Brahmins
despatched in all directions,
to find out about Nala.

35 On instructions from king Bhīma,
the Brahmins approached Damayantī
to inform her of their mission
to find Nala.

36 Bhīma's daughter made them promise
to repeat,
in all countries and to all people
these words:

37 *My beloved gambler,*
did you cut off half of my dress
and desert your dear
and devoted sleeping wife?

38 *She waits for you exactly*
as you left her,
covered with a half-cloth
and mourning your absence.

39 *Lord-of-the-earth heroic one,*
be kind to her and return to her,
who will not stop weeping
until you come.

40 "Say these words," Damayantī told them,
"and add:
The wind-fanned fire consumes the forest.
That will move him.

41 Add this too: *A wife deserves*
to be cherished and protected by her husband.
Why do you, a man of dharma,
neglect dharma?

42 *You are famous, wise, dignified, kind.*
Why have you suddenly
become unkind?
Is that why your wife suffers?

43 *O tiger-among-men! O bull-brave hero!*
Be kind to me.
It was you who used to tell me:
No dharma is greater than kindness.

44 If anyone gets startled
when you speak in this way,
study that man carefully –
find out who he is, where he lives.

45 Excellent Brahmins!
Let me know what that man says
if these words of yours
move him to say anything.

46 And take special care that none knows
I taught you these words;
and hurry back to me
if any man responds to them.

47 Find out whether he is rich or poor,
powerful or weak –
and find out
what he plans to do."

48 With these instructions
the Brahmins spread out in all directions
in their quest for Nala,
who had been stricken by adversity.

49 They covered cities and kingdoms
and villages
and the humble dwellings of cowherds
and the āśramas of holy men;

50 O Yudhiṣṭhira! Wherever they went,
they repeated the words
that they had been taught by Damayantī
exactly as instructed.

SECTION SEVENTY

1 A long time passed.
Then Parṇāda the Brahmin
returned to Vidarbha
and reported to the daughter of Bhīma:

2 "Damayanti, in my quest of Nala,
king of the Niṣadhas,
I went to the city of Ayodhyā
ruled by Ṛtuparṇa.

3 Lovely lady, finest of women,
I recited the sentences
that you had taught us
before mahā-fortune-favoured Ṛtuparṇa.

4 I kept repeating them,
but neither rājā Ṛtuparṇa
nor any of his courtiers
said a word in reply.

5 He gave me permission to leave.
As I was leaving,
among them a man named Bāhuka
said he wished to see me in private.

6 Bāhuka is the king's charioteer, short-armed,
not too goodlooking a man,
but skilled in fast driving
and tasty cooking.

7 He sighed heavily
and seemed to be actually sobbing
as he questioned me about my welfare;
he said to me:

8 'Though calamity overtake them,
superior women know
how to protect themselves;
they find heaven's truth, no doubt of that.

9 Even if their husbands desert them,
noble women do not harbour anger;
their character gives them
the strength to be patient.

10 She should not show anger,
for the person who deserted her
was foolish and troubled
and could not offer her happiness.

11 The lovely lady should not be angry
with the suffering culprit
who lost his dress to the birds
while searching for food.

12 Whether treated justly or unjustly,
she should not be angry
with a wealth-less, kingdom-less,
hunger-and-sorrow-stricken husband.'

13 I heard him say this,
and I rushed here.
Go to the rājā, and inform him
of these happenings."

14 Damayantī,
her eyes brimming with tears,
hurried to her mother,
and said to her:

15 "Mother, do not tell Bhīma a word
about my plan.
It is my intention to engage
the noble Brahmin Sudeva,

16 And if you wish my welfare,
I earnestly request you
not to inform my father
about what I am going to do.

17 Let the same religious ceremonies
be performed that helped the Brahmins
to discover me,
and send Sudeva at once

18 To the city of Ayodhyā
to fetch king Nala here."
The lovely lady, Vidarbha's princess,
went to Parṇāda, who had rested,

19 And offered him much wealth.
She said to him,
"Brahmin, I will give you more
when Nala comes here.

20 Noble sir, you have done much for me
that none else could do.
I am now confident
my husband will return."

21 The mahā-minded Brahmin blessed her
and consoled her;
and then he went to his home,
happy with his success.

22 In the meantime
Damayantī summoned Sudeva;
in a sad voice she said to him
in her mother's presence:

23 "Go straight like a homing bird, Sudeva,
to the city of Ayodhyā
and give king Ṛtuparṇa
this message:

24 'Damayantī, daughter of king Bhīma,
is holding another svayaṁvara
to which flock rājās and princes
from all lands.

25 The time is short.
The svayaṁvara will be held tomorrow.
If, great foe-vanquisher,
you wish to be present, leave instantly.

26 After sunset tomorrow,
Damayantī will take a second husband,
for no one knows if brave Nala
is alive or dead'."

27 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira! The Brahmin Sudeva
left immediately on his mission.
He repeated before king Ṛtuparṇa
exactly as instructed.

SECTION SEVENTY-ONE

1 King Ṛtuparṇa listened to Sudeva,
and turned to Bāhuka,
to whom he said gently
(continued Bṛhadaśva):

2 "Bāhuka, you are the expert in horses.
Tell me, is it possible
to reach Vidarbha in time
for Damayantī's svayaṁvara?"

3 Mahā-minded Nala heard the rājā
and his head seemed to explode with grief,
a profound anguish
racked his body.

4 *It must be Damayantī is doing this*
out of despair, he thought.
Or perhaps this is her grand plan
to find me.

5 *If she really means it,*
she must be cruel indeed;
perhaps she's doing it
because I foolishly deceived her.

6 *Women are unpredictable.*
I am guilty, I know.
Perhaps my long separation –
perhaps she loves me no more.

7 *No, slim-waisted Damayantī*
still thinks of me.
She cannot do this.
After all, there are the children . . .

8 *I will go there and find out for myself*
if this is true or not.
I'll agree to Ṛtuparṇa,
and help myself also.

9 He did *añjali* before Ṛtuparṇa
and – with a mind
sad in spite of its resolve –
he said:

10 "O tiger-among-men,
one day's time is sufficient –
because you command me,
I will take you to Vidarbha."

11 Commanded by Bhaṅgasvara's son Ṛtuparṇa
Bāhuka went to the stables,
where he carefully inspected
the horses.

12 Ṛtuparṇa's insistent request made Bāhuka go
to select the horses;
he chose lean, strong,
stamina-endowed horses,
capable of standing up
to a long journey;

13 Tough, tight-fleshed; high-pedigreed,
gentle, unmarked by any inauspicious signs,
with broad nostrils,
swelling mahā-cheeks;

14 They came from Sindhu, they possessed
the ten hairy curls,
they were swift as wind.
The rājā saw them and angrily said:

15 "What's this! Are you joking?
Do you expect
these skinny, breathless horses
to take us on our long journey?"

16 Bāhuka replied, "One curl on the forehead,
two on the cheeks,
four on the breast, one on the loin,
four on the flanks –

17 These are the right horses
to speed us to Vidarbha.
If your majesty prefers others,
I will yoke those."

18 "Bāhuka," replied Ṛtuparṇa
"you are the horse-expert.
Yoke the ones you think fit –
and do it soon."

19 Intelligent and skilful Nala
yoked high-pedigreed,
gentle and swift horses
to the king's chariot.

20 Rājā Ṛtuparṇa climbed into the chariot –
the moment he got in,
the horses collapsed
on their knees.

21 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! Excellent, noble Nala
quickly approached them,
and whispered encouragement
to the swift, strong steeds.

22 He raised them, holding the reins,
made the charioteer Vārṣṇeya mount,
and drove off at great speed
towards Vidarbha.

23 The splendid horses,
guided by Bāhuka,
seemed to fly on the ground,
to the amazement of the occupants.

24 The illustrious king of Ayodhyā,
seeing the horses
race with the speed of wind,
was awestruck.

25 And Vārṣṇeya, listening to the sound
of the chariot wheels
and noticing Bāhuka's skill,
began wondering:

26 "He must be Mātali himself,
charioteer of Devarāja-Indra!
All the signs seem
to indicate that.

27 Perhaps he is Śālihotra,
who knows all about horses.
Śālihotra has surely assumed
this human form."

28 He continued to think:
"Maybe it is rājā Nala,
the annihilator of hostile cities,
who has come here.

29 Perhaps Bāhuka has learnt his skill
from Nala,
for he seems to know all
that Nala was famed for.

30 Nala and Bāhuka are about the same age.
No, he is probably not mahā-valiant Nala –
just someone
with the same knowledge.

31 Sometimes, out of misfortune
or as ordained in the śāstras,
mahātmās roam about the world
in disguise.

32 Just because he is ugly
should not prejudice me;
I think he has somehow assumed
another form.

33 The age is the same, but the men are different –
but who knows –
I have a feeling
that Bāhuka is all-guṇa-glorious Nala."

34 These thoughts kept revolving
in the mind of Vārṣṇeya,
the charioteer of Mahārāja Ṛtuparṇa
of Ayodhyā.

35 Not only Vārṣṇeya – Indra-among-rājās Ṛtuparṇa too,
delighted with Bāhuka's skill,
kept wondering
who the horse-expert could be.

36 He was impressed
with the confidence and zeal of Bāhuka –
the way he held the reins,
his absolute self-assurance.

SECTION SEVENTY-TWO

1 Like a bird through the sky
(continued Bṛhadaśva),
Bāhuka crossed rivers and hills,
forests and lakes.

2 As the chariot raced,
foe-conquering Ṛtuparṇa
saw his upper-garment slip and fall
on the ground.

3 As soon as he felt it fall,
the rājā turned to Nala
and expressed his desire
to retrieve the garment.

4 "Mahā-skilled one, stop the chariot,
rein in the horses,
till Vārṣṇeya brings me back
my upper garment."

5 "Your majesty," replied Nala,
"it's too late;
we are one yojana ahead already;
it is impossible."

6 By this time they had come near a tree –
the *vibhītaka* –
in full blossom in a wood.
The king noticed it.

7 Rājā Ṛtuparṇa turned to Nala and said,
"Bāhuka, let me give you an idea
of my powers
of calculation.

8 All men do not know all things.
Indeed, there is none
who has all knowledge;
knowledge cannot be thus limited.

9 The leaves and fruits
that have fallen from this tree
exceed the leaves and fruits
on the tree itself

10 By one hundred and one.
Bahuka, these two branches
of the tree have five crore leaves.
If you like,

11 You can inspect the two branches
and their boughs,
and the fruits on them will be
two thousand and ninety-five."

12 Bāhuka stopped the chariot
and said, "O foe-subduing rājā,
what you say to me
is beyond my comprehension.

13 But if you permit me
I will cut down the *vibhītaka*,
and start counting – in that way, O rājā,
I will have proof.

14 I will cut the tree, mahārāja,
in your very presence.
How else can I tell
if your counting is accurate or not?

15 Lord of the earth!
I will count the fruits in your presence.
Order Vārṣṇeya to hold the reins
while I dismount."

16 The king said,
"We have no time to waste."
Bāhuka replied with all humility,
"Your majesty,

17 Wait briefly;
but if you are in a great hurry,
let Vārṣṇeya drive you.
The road is straight and smooth."

18 King Ṛtuparṇa said softly to Bāhuka,
"You know very well
there is none who excels you
as a charioteer.

19 You are the absolute expert
in horsemanship,
and I want you to take me to Vidarbha.
Don't make useless delays.

20 I will let you do the counting later,
but first take me today
to the land of the Vidarbhas,
before sunset."

21 Bāhuka answered:
"I will first count the *vibhītaka*,
and then take you to Vidarbha.
Give me permission."

22 Reluctantly the rājā allowed him
to start counting,
but added, "Good man, great horse-expert,
it will be enough

23 Proof of my assertion
if you count the fruits
on a single branch."
Nala dismounted, and cut the tree.

24 He counted the fruits, and saw
that the rājā had spoken the truth.
Utterly amazed,
he said to the king:

25 "O rājā! How magnificent!
Your majesty is a marvel!
Teach me this wonderful art
that you know so well."

26 The rājā, eager to leave
as soon as possible, said,
"Do you know that, calculation apart,
I know dice-play also?

27 Bāhuka said, "O bull-brave hero!
Teach me the art of dice,
and take from me
all the horse-skill I possess."

28 Rājā Ṛtuparṇa, because he knew
the importance of horsemanship
and because he was obsessed by it,
agreed to the exchange.

29 "So let it be, Bāhuka," he said,
"take my dice-skill
and give me your horse-skill." With these words,
Ṛtuparṇa handed over his dice-knowledge.

30 As soon as Nala obtained
the dice-knowledge,
Kali emerged from his body,
and he vomited the poison of Karkoṭaka.

31 And the curse-fire of Kali
also gushed out –
that curse which had trapped rājā Nala
in its painful clutches.

32 Kali, poison-freed,
regained his original form.
Nala, out of anger,
wanted to cast a curse on him.

33 Frightened, Kali did *añjali* before Nala.
Trembling, he said,
"King, control your anger – in exchange,
I will give you great fame.

34 Indrasena's mother Damayantī
angrily cursed me long ago –
when you had deserted her –
I have suffered enough.

35 Day and night, O Indra-among-rājās,
I have lived inside your body,
racked by agonising
Nāgarāja snake-poison.

36 I throw myself at your mercy.
Listen to my words.
If you decide not to curse me,
who shudder in front of you,

37 All people who listen attentively
to your story,
will never have cause to fear me."
Rājā Nala controlled his anger.

38 Kali, still terrified, entered
the *vibhītaka* tree.
(What passed between Nala and Kali
was not heard by others.)

39 And instantly all afflictions
left the heroic rājā;
he counted the fruits of the tree joyfully,
he was suddenly possessed

40 With immense energy.
He mounted the chariot again;
and urging the horses,
he hurried to Vidarbha.

41 Possessed by Kali,
the *vibhītaka* tree became worthless.
Nala, pleased with his success,
kept encouraging the horses

42 And they sped like birds
gliding in the air,
swiftly galloping in the direction
of the kingdom of Vidarbha.

43 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! After Nala had gone
a long distance, Kali went home.
Rājā Nala's sorrows left him,
but he did not regain his shape.

SECTION SEVENTY-THREE

1 Bṛhadaśva continued: Truly valiant king Ṛtuparṇa
arrived in Vidarbha in the evening.
News of his arrival was brought
to rājā Bhīma.

2 At Bhīma's request rājā Ṛtuparṇa
entered the city of Kuṇḍina,
deafening the horizon
with his chariot's rattle.

3 Nala's horses heard the din of the chariot,
and neighed joyfully,
as they used to
when Nala was present.

4 And Damayantī too
heard the tremendous din,
like the rumble of dark clouds
during the monsoon.

5 And great was her surprise.
King Bhīma's daughter
and the horses of Nala
both guessed the mahā-noise
to be like that in the past
when Nala drove his chariot.

6 The peacocks of the palace,
the elephants in the stables,
and the horses –
all heard the deafening din.

7 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
They turned their faces in the chariot's direction,
and screamed joyfully,
anticipating rain-clouds.

8 "It must be Nala," thought Damayantī,
"for the noise of the chariot
fills the earth
and gladdens my heart.

9 If now I do not see
varied-virtued heroic Nala,
Nala whose face is like the moon,
I will surely die.

10 If now I cannot be enfolded
in his arms,
and feel the thrilling touch of his embrace,
I will surely perish.

11 If the king of the Niṣadhas
does not speak to me
in his rain-cloud rumbling voice,
I will jump into fire.

12 If the Indra-among-rājās lion-brave king,
whose courage is like that of an elephant,
does not come to me now,
I will surely die.

13 No untruth has ever touched him,
I have never seen him hurt anyone,
he has never
even jokingly lied.

14 My lord is illustrious, forgiving, brave, generous;
he excels other kings;
not mean even in private;
like a eunuch is my disciplined Niṣadha.

15 Recalling his goodness day and night,
I follow his example.
My heart is bursting
because of his absence."

16 Damayantī (Bṛhadaśva continued)
sadly, in a trance,
went to the terrace of her palace
to catch of glimpse of Nala.

17 From the centre of the palace's terrace
she saw lord-of-the-earth Ṛtuparṇa,
and with him
Vārṣṇeya and Bāhuka.

18 Vārṣṇeya and Bāhuka alighted
from the splendid chariot,
unharnessed the horses,
and tethered them at a distance.

19 Ṛtuparṇa descended from the chariot
and went to meet
mahārāja Bhīma
of matchless prowess.

20 Bhīma greeted him respectfully,
with the usual gifts.
Ṛtuparṇa was given all the honour
due to a rājā.

21 But Ṛtuparṇa saw no signs
of any svayaṁvara
in the course of his stay
in lovely Kuṇḍina.

22 He had no idea
of what the ladies had planned.
Rājā Bhīma casually asked
what had brought him to Vidarbha.

23 Bhīma had no idea
that rājā Ṛtuparṇa had come
for Damayantī's svayaṁvara.
Intelligent Ṛtuparṇa

24 Could not see a single prince
or rājā anywhere;
no assemblies of Brahmins;
no talk of any svayaṁvara.

25 The ruler of the Kosalas,
Ṛtuparṇa thought the matter over
and finally said,
"I am here to felicitate you."

26 Rājā Bhīma smiled inwardly:
king Ṛtuparṇa had covered
more than a hundred *yojanas*
simply to felicitate him!

27 He thought: *No, it cannot be.*
He cannot have crossed
so many villages, so many kingdoms,
just to pay me his regards.

28 *It's too flimsy a reason.*
Well, I will find out in due time.
So Bhīma in turn
did Ṛtuparṇa special honour.

29 He said again and again,
"You must be tired.
Please rest." Ṛtuparṇa was pleased
by the gracious attention.

30 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
He went to his appointed quarters,
followed by the palace-servants.
After Ṛtuparṇa and Vārṣṇeya had left,

31 Bāhuka took the chariot
to the stables,
where he unyoked the horses,
and washed and fed them.

32 Bāhuka stroked and patted them,
and rested himself
on one side of the chariot.
Distressed Damayantī had seen Ṛtuparṇa,

33 The charioteer Vārṣṇeya and Bāhuka;
in her sadness she wondered,
Whose chariot is it
that made that tremendous din?

34 *It sounded like Nala's chariot.*
But I can't see him anywhere.
It must be Vārṣṇeya
has learnt the art of driving.

35 *That is why the chariot's din*
sounded like Nala's chariot's.
Perhaps Ṛtuparṇa is as proficient
as rājā Nala.

36 O lord of the earth Yudhiṣṭhira!
Thinking in this fashion,
lovely Damayantī despatched a girl-messenger
to search for king Nala.

SECTION SEVENTY-FOUR

1 "Keśinī," Damayantī said, "go,
find out who that ugly,
short-armed person is,
squatting beside the chariot.

2 Approach him courteously,
and gently enquire
about his welfare;
and find out all you can about him.

3 I suspect he may be
Nala himself.
My mind is eager to know,
my heart full of uneasiness.

4 Lovely-waisted girl, when you have enquired
after his health,
repeat Parṇāda's words,
and observe his reaction."

5 The girl gingerly approached Bāhuka
(Bṛhadaśva continued),
while Damayantī watched from the terrace,
and asked:

6 "O Indra-among-men! O bull-brave hero!
You are welcome here.
May you prosper!
This is what Damayantī wants to know:

7 'When did you start? Why are you here?'
Tell me this,
because king Bhīma's daughter
wishes to know all the details."

8 "The mahā-ātmaned rājā of Kosala,"
replied Bāhuka-Nala,
"heard from a Brahmin
about Damayantī's second svayaṁvara.

9 So his majesty and I, his charioteer,
set out on splendid
one-hundred-*yojana*-covering,
wind-swift horses."

10 "And the third person?" Keśinī asked.
"Who is he?
Whose son are you,
and how were you able to arrive so fast?"

11 "He is Nala's charioteer,"
replied Bāhuka,
"gracious one, his name is Vārṣṇeya.
When Nala lost his kingdom,
he decided to take up service
with king Ṛtuparṇa.

12 I too know enough about horses,
so I am his charioteer.
Ṛtuparṇa has appointed me cook
as well."

13 "Vārṣṇeya then must know,"
Keśinī said,
"where rājā Nala is.
Bāhuka! Has he told you anything?"

14 "After bringing noble Nala's children here,"
Bāhuka replied,
"Vārṣṇeya went away.
He knows nothing about Nala.

15 Illustrious lady! No one knows about Nala.
Disfigured into an ugly man,
this king wanders by himself
all over the world.

16 Only Nala knows where Nala is.
Only his innermost self knows.
And Nala leaves
no tell-tale marks anywhere."

17 "The Brahmin who went to Ayodhyā,"
Keśinī persisted,
"kept repeating these words
which are a woman's words.

18 *My beloved gambler,*
did you cut off half of my cloth,
and desert your dear
and devoted sleeping wife?

19 *She waits for you exactly*
as you left her,
covered with a half-cloth
and moaning your absence day and night.

20 *Lord of the earth, heroic one,*
be kind to her and return to her,
who will not stop weeping
until you come.

21 *Mahā-minded one, tell her the story*
that she likes to hear,
speak words that Vidarbha's daughter
loves to hear.

22 When you heard these words,
you replied to the Brahmin.
Reply now too.
Damayantī waits eagerly."

23 O Kaurava descendant Yudhiṣṭhira!
When he heard Keśinī speak like this
(continued Bṛhadaśva), Nala's heart agonised,
his eyes filled with tears.

24 He checked his grief,
 but he could not hide
the burning pain in his voice
 as he said to her:

25 "Though calamity overtake them,
 noble women know
how to protect themselves;
 they find heaven's truth, no doubt of that.

26 Even if their husbands desert them,
 superior women do not become angry;
their character gives them
 the strength of patience.

27 She should not show anger,
 for the person who deserted her
was foolish and troubled
 and could not offer her happiness.

28 She should not be angry
 with the remorseful culprit
who lost his cloth to the birds
 while searching for food.

29 Whether treated justly or unjustly,
 she should not be angry
with a wealth-less, kingdom-less,
 hunger-and-sorrow-stricken husband."

30 O Bharata descendant Yudhiṣṭhira! As he said this
 (continued Bṛhadaśva),
sorrow-laden Nala, unable to check himself,
 began sobbing loudly.

31 Keśinī went away and reported
 all that took place between them,
and how Bāhuka burst
 into uncontrollable tears.

SECTION SEVENTY-FIVE

1 Bṛhadaśva continued: When Damayantī heard this,
she again became sad,
but guessing it must be Nala,
she said to Keśinī:

2 "Keśinī, go again,
and observe Bāhuka closely;
arrange to be near him,
and watch every move he makes.

3 Whenever he does something,
find out why he does it;
and if he is specially skilful in any art,
note that too.

4 If he asks for fire or water,
be in no hurry to supply it;
do your best, Keśinī,
to delay him.

5 And report to me
after you have observed everything;
report on every usual and unusual gesture
of his.

6 And anything else you see
that you think peculiar about him,
let me know."
Keśinī went to do as told.

7 She gathered all the information she could
about the horse-expert,
and reported it in detail
to Damayantī.

8 "Damayantī," she said,
"I have never met a person
who has such grace of bearing
and kindness of behaviour.

9 When he approaches a narrow entrance,
he does not have to stoop;
the door elongates at his touch,
and he enters.

10 A narrow entrance widens.
Rājā Bhīma sent to Ṛtuparṇa
a plentiful supply
of delicious food,

11 Including pulpy fruit
of all kinds.
Numerous vessels were sent
to wash the fruit in.

12 When Bāhuka looked at them,
the vessels by themselves filled with water.
He washed the meat,
and began to cook.

13 No sooner had he grasped
a handful of dry grass
and held it in the sunlight
than it blazed up.

14 That so amazed me
that I rushed here to tell you.
And another remarkable thing
that I saw –

15 Though he touched fire,
he was not burnt.
He seemed to command water to flow,
and it really flowed!

16 Still another wonder!
He took a few flowers
in his hands
and slowly crushed them –

17 But they would not get crushed,
though he pressed hard –
in fact, they become lovelier
and even more fragrant.
Seeing all this,
I rushed here."

18 Damayantī heard
of these marvellous occurrences,
and she concluded that it could be none else
but fulsomely famous Nala.

19 The thought made her cry softly.
She turned to Keśinī
and said to her
very sweetly:

20 "Good girl, go again,
and fetch from the kitchen
some meat cooked by Bāhuka,
without his knowing."

21 The helpful girl
ran to the kitchen
and quickly returned
with some specially-boiled meat.

22 O Kaurava descendant Yudhiṣṭhira!
She gave the preparation to Damayantī,
who in the past had often tasted such dishes
cooked by Nala.

23 She tasted the food –
and knew it must be Nala.
Tears welled in her eyes.
She washed her face.

24 O Bharata-descendant Yudhiṣṭhira!
Then she sent Keśinī with her twin children
to Nala, who immediately recognised
Indrasena and her brother.

25 Rājā Nala rose, went to them, lifted them,
and placed them in his lap.
He hugged the god-like children,
and he wept;

26 He wept bitterly, softly.
Suddenly he pushed them aside roughly,
and said
to Keśinī:

27 "They are like my children, good woman,
this lovely boy and girl.
The shock of seeing them
made me cry.

28 If you keep coming to me like this,
people will start suspecting –
after all,
I am a guest here.
Good woman, take them away
and leave this place."

SECTION SEVENTY-SIX

1 Keśinī reported the terrible mental strain
of fulsomely famed Bāhuka
to Damayantī
(continued Bṛhadaśva).

2 Damayantī sent Keśinī to her mother;
deeply moved and pained,
she now wanted
to meet Nala.

3 "I think Bāhuka is Nala,
I have sure proof of this.
Only his looks –
but I must go and satisfy myself.

4 Mother, with or without telling father,
arrange this.
Either let him come to me,
or let me go to him."

5 Her mother reported her intention
to the king of Vidarbha –
and Bhima for the first time learned
of his daughter's wish.

6 O bull brave Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira!
Damayantī obtained the permission of her parents,
and it was arranged to have Bāhuka meet her
in her apartment.

7 Seeing Damayantī in person
in front of him,
Bāhuka became confused and troubled,
and she began to weep.

8 The lovely lady Damayantī,
seeing Nala incoherent and sad,
was overwhelmed
with profound pity.

9 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira! Damayantī,
wearing a soiled, dust-spotted dress,
her hair dishevelled,
asked Bāhuka:

10 "Bāhuka, do you know any man of dharma
who deserted his sleeping wife
and went away, leaving her unprotected
in the forest?

11 Who but fulsomely famed Nala
would do a thing like that,
deserting his tired,
beloved, helpless wife?

12 In what way did I ever hurt him,
that he, the earth's lord,
should forsake me in the forest
while I was sleeping?

13 I rejected the gods,
and chose him for my husband.
How could he abandon
the devoted mother of his children?

14 He took my hand in his – in front of the fire,
in the presence of the gods,
he made the sacred pledge.
What happened to the pledge?"

15 O foe-conquering Yudhiṣṭhira!
As she spoke these words,
large tears ran down the cheeks of Damayantī,
daughter of king Bhīma.

16 Nala saw her tears,
the tears coursed down her cheeks
from black gazelle-eyes with pink edges;
sadly he said to her:

17 "Gentle lady, I was not responsible
for all that happened.
It was Kali who made me leave you
in the forest.

18 You cursed Kali in the forest,
when you suffered your dharma-crisis
and moaned alone,
and anger took hold of you.

19 Since then, burnt by your curse,
Kali entered my body;
he entered my body,
and haunted me day and night.

20 My tapasyā and determination
have now got rid of him.
Auspicious lady, do not grieve –
our sorrows are ended.

21 Large-hipped lady,
Kali has now left me, and so I am here.
I am here only
because I need you.

22 Gentle lady, is it conceivable that any woman,
leaving her loving and loyal first husband,
will select a second husband –
as you are planning?

23 By order of the king,
even now messengers are proclaiming
everywhere that the daughter of Bhīma
will choose another husband.

24 Like a self-willed woman,
she is planning to marry again
to suit herself.
That is what brought Ṛtuparṇa here."

25 This accusation of Nala's
made Damayantī tremble;
fearfully she offered him *añjali*,
and said:

26 “Do not suspect me, noble Niṣadha!
 I am innocent.
I rejected the gods,
 and selected you for my husband.

27 Many Brahmins were sent
 in all the directions
with verses I composed,
 in order to bring you here.

28 Finally one Brahmin, Parṇāda,
 discovered you
in the palace of king Ṛtuparṇa
 of Kosala.

29 After hearing his report
 of the answer you gave,
I devised this plan
 to bring back the Niṣadha ruler.

30 O ruler of the world,
 who else is there who can cover on horses
a hundred *yojanas*
 in a single day?

31 Lord of the earth,
 I touch your feet with my head,
and swear I have not been unfaithful
 even in thought.

32 Let the all-witnessing air
 that embraces the world
take away my life
 if I have committed any wrong.

33 Let the dazzling sun
 that illuminates the sky
take away my life
 if I have committed any wrong,

34 Let the moon who dwells as witness
 in the hearts of all
take away my life
 if I have committed any wrong.

35 Let the three gods who preside
 over the three worlds
today reveal the whole truth –
 or let them leave me forever."

36 The wind-god, invoked by Damayantī,
 said:
"Nala, this is the truth –
 your wife is innocent.

37 O rājā! She has preserved and increased
 her precious honour.
We, her guardians for three years,
 know this.

38 She devised this excellent plan
 to bring you back –
who but you could cover a hundred *yojanas*
 in one day?

39 Ruler of the earth, you are hers,
 and she is yours.
Do not suspect her conduct.
 Be united with her."

40 Even as the wind-god spoke,
 there fell a shower of flowers;
celestial kettledrums sounded,
 and auspicious breezes began blowing.

41 Impressed by the marvellous spectacle,
 foe-crushing Nala
discarded whatever doubts he had
 about Damayantī's character.

42 He put on a new dress,
 and remembered the Nāga rājā –
and immediately he regained
 his original form.

43 Seeing him as Nala,
 the daughter of king Bhīma
embraced him,
 and began to weep uncontrollably.

44 And rājā Nala embraced
the daughter of king Bhīma
and his two children,
and felt a deep peace within him.

45 The lovely-faced, large-eyed lady
placed her head against his chest,
and sighed deeply
and wept continuously.

46 Overwhelmed by emotion,
tiger-among-men Nala stood silent,
holding his sweet-smiling dust-covered wife
close to him.

47 Damayantī's mother happily
went and informed king Bhīma
of all that had passed
between Nala and Damayantī.

48 "Tomorrow," said mahārāja Bhīma,
"I will see Nala,
after his ablutions,
sitting with Damayantī at his side.
Today he should be given time
to rest."

49 Husband and wife spent that night
relaxing and recalling
their experiences of wandering
in the forest.

50 Nala and Damayantī
passed their days happily
in the palace of king Bhīma,
making each other happy.

51 It was in the fourth year
that Nala was reunited
with his wife, and once again
found the highest pleasure.

52 Just as half-sprouted seeds
delight in their first shower,
Damayantī delighted
in the return of Nala.

53 Her weariness disappeared,
her sorrows vanished;
her beauty glowed again
like a night of uninterrupted moonlight.

SECTION SEVENTY-SEVEN

1 Bṛhadaśva continued:
Rājā Nala spent that night joyfully
and in the morning
appeared before Bhīma richly ornamented,
with Damayantī at his side.

2 Nala paid his respects to his father-in-law,
and, after him,
lovely Damayantī also
sought Bhima's blessings.

3 Rājā Bhīma received him happily
as he would a son,
offered him the customary honour,
and spoke consoling words

4 As befitted the occasion.
Nala accepted the honour,
and in return
offered his father-in-law

5 His dutiful services.
And instantly the entire city
burst into acclamation
and joyful, spontaneous celebration.

6 The citizens were delighted
to have Nala back in the capital.
They hoisted flags,
and offered flower-garlands.

7 The streets were well-watered,
decorated with flowers
and other beautiful objects;
flowers also adorned all the houses.

8 The temples too were flower-adorned.
  Ṛtuparṇa was pleased to learn
that Nala,
  desiguised as Bāhuka,

9 Was reunited with Damayantī.
  He called on rājā Nala,
the ruler of the earth,
  and asked his forgiveness.

10 Wise Nala also asked
  Ṛtuparṇa's forgiveness
for many reasons.
  Ṛtuparṇa, surprised and impressed,

11 Because he knew the whole story,
  said to Nala:
"How good that you have been reunited
  with your wife.

12 King of the Niṣadhas,
  lord of the earth,
I hope I did not hurt you
  when you were serving me.

13 If I have in any way
  done you any wrong,
knowingly or unknowingly,
  I beg your pardon."

14 "You did me no wrong at all,"
  Nala replied.
"If you did, I did not notice it,
  so the pardon is easy.

15 You were my *sakhā*-friend and relative
  even earlier:
I was happy with you,
  and have always been so.

16 I found happiness in your house
  that I do not find
even in mine.
  The horse-knowledge that is with me,

17 If you wish, I will now give it
gladly to you."
Saying this, he transferred his horse-skills
to Ṛtuparṇa.

18 Ṛtuparṇa accepted the knowledge,
as a result of which
he became proficient
as if by ordinance of fate.

19 He passed on his dice-skill
to king Nala,
and returned to his city
with another charioteer.

20 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! After Ṛtuparṇa left,
Nala did not stay too long
in the city of Kuṇḍina
(said Bṛhadaśva).

SECTION SEVENTY-EIGHT

1 Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira (continued Bṛhadaśva):
After staying for about a month,
Nala took Bhīma's permission
and, with a handful of attendants,
went to Niṣadha.

2 He had a magnificent chariot,
along with sixteen elephants,
fifty horses, and six hundred
excellent soldiers.

3 The earth trembled as he marched.
Bursting with anger,
he entered the capital
of the Niṣadha kingdom.

4 The heroic son of Vīrasena
announced to Puṣkara
he would like to play dice again,
for he was wealthy again.

[III:78:5-13]

Transcreated by P. Lal

5 "Puṣkara," said Nala,
"on one side I stake Damayantī
and all my wealth;
you stake your kingdom.

6 Let the dice-game begin. A single stake!
I have made up my mind.
May luck favour you – because all we have,
our lives too, are at stake.

7 The highest dharma is said to be
to stake back all that one has won,
wealth and kingdom –
everything.

8 If you feel unhappy
about a dice-game,
let's fight with weapons.
Let a duel re-establish harmony.

9 Old and wise men have advised
that no means should be spared
in recovering
one's ancestral kingdom.

10 Puṣkara, you have a choice today.
Choose.
You have a dice-game on the one side,
bow-bending on the other."

11 Puṣkara listened to Nala
and, confident that he would win,
smiled and said
(continued Bṛhadaśva):

12 "Your luck must have turned
to give you new wealth
to wager in a new game.
Damayantī's misfortunes are over.

13 You are lucky to have Damayantī
still with you, O mahā-muscled one.
After I win this game,
the daughter of king Bhīma

14 Decked in all her finery,
will attend on me,
as apsarās attend on Śakra-Indra in heaven.
I am ready for you.

15 It does not please me
to gamble with relatives.
When I win Damayantī today,
the lovely-thighed, blameless lady,

16 I will be happy,
for she is, and has been,
the idol of my heart."
Nala heard these boastful words of Puṣkara,

17 And was so enraged that he wanted
to decapitate him with his sword.
Though his eyes flamed with anger,
he smiled and said:

18 "Let's start. Why waste time?
After you have won,
you can say what you like."
The dice-match began.

19 Puṣkara, who had staked even his life,
lost at the first throw
by Nala –
he lost all his wealth too.

20 Rājā Nala laughed at the defeated Puṣkara:
"My thorns
are now all removed.
The kingdom is again mine.

21 Fool, worst of rājās,
you dare not now even look at Damayantī.
You and your family
are now her slaves.

22 It wasn't you who defeated me in the past.
It was Kali, not you.
Idiot!
That never occurred to you!

23 I will not blame you
for the crimes of others.
Go, and be happy.
I grant you your life.

24 I give you your share of the kingdom.
You can see, brave one,
that my love for you
remains undiminished.

25 Puṣkara, the brother's love
that I have for you
will remain unchanged.
May you live a hundred years, my brother."

26 After admonishing his brother,
Nala repeatedly embraced him,
and advised him to go
to his own city.

27 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! Puṣkara did *añjali* before Nala
after receiving this favour
and said to the fulsomely famed
king of the Niṣadhas:

28 "May your fame be immortal,
may you rule peacefully
for ten thousand years,
because you gave me life and refuge."

29 Puṣkara, well-treated by his brother,
was satisfied,
and returned to his city
with many of his relatives,
after spending one month
in the palace of Niṣadha.

30 A strong contingent of soldiers
and humble attendants
accompanied him.
Puṣkara departed like a radiant sun.

31 After settling Puṣkara and providing him
with all comforts,
Śrīmān rājā Nala entered
his own magnificently-decorated palace,

32 From where he reassured his citizens,
who, along with his subjects
from the kingdom's other cities,
were gratified.

33 The officials of the court,
led by the minister,
did *añjali* before Nala,
saying, "O rājā,
we feel today like the gods do
under hundred-yajña-ed Śatakratu-Indra."

SECTION SEVENTY-NINE

1 The city prepared for festivity
(continued Bṛhadaśva),
and rājā Nala left with a large army
to bring back Damayantī.

2 Her father, slayer-of-foes Bhīma,
powerful Bhīma,
honoured her with traditional rites,
and sent her to Nala.

3 King Nala, the Vidarbha princess Damayantī,
their son and daughter,
passed their days in happiness,
like the gods in Nandana.

4 The mahā-famed king once again
began to rule his kingdom,
and his fame spread
among Jambūdvīpa's kings.

5 He performed many yajñas
and offered huge *dakṣiṇā*s to Brahmins.
O Indra-among-rājās Yudhiṣṭhira,
you will do the same.

6 O bull-brave Bharata, finest of men Yudhiṣṭhira
(Bṛhadaśva said to Yudhiṣṭhira),
Nala's gambling
led to his misfortune.

[III:79:7-15]

Transcreated by P. Lal

7 Nala suffered terribly when alone,
his anguish was almost unbearable,
yet he emerged
with all his glory regained.

8 Son of Pāṇḍu, Yudhiṣṭhira!
You, however, have Draupadi
and your brothers with you in this forest;
your heart is fixed on dharma.

9 O rājā! Why should you grieve at all?
You are constantly meeting
excellent Veda-learned Brahmins
in the forest.

10 To recite the story of Nala
and Damayantī,
of the Nāga Karkoṭa and rājarṣi Ṛtuparṇa
is to destroy Kali.

11 O invincible one! Lord of men!
This Kali-killing history
has power to console and strengthen
people like you.

12 Remember that all human effort
is fickle and futile;
do not exult in prosperity,
do not grieve in adversity.

13 Mahārāja, remember this history–
and be comforted.
do not exult in prosperity,
do not grieve in adversity.

14 Think how capricious fate is,
how trivial human effort;
strong-willed men never despair;
they trust truth and goodness.

15 Calamity does not touch those
who listen
to the wonderful story of Nala
and those who recite it.

16 The man who listens to this ancient,
excellent, incomparable history-story
gets all his desires fulfilled;
he gets wealth,

17 Sons, grandsons, livestock,
eminent position,
health and happiness.
There is no doubt of this.

18 The fear that you have, O lord of men,
that someone will again lure you
into a dice-game –
let me dispel that now.

19 O truly valiant son of Kuntī,
I am an expert in the secrets of dice-play.
You please me:
I will teach it to you.

20 O Janamejaya! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Yudhiṣṭhira happily said to Bṛhadaśva:
"Revered one,
teach me the secrets of dice-play."

21 So Bṛhadaśva of mahā-tapasyā
taught the secrets to mahā-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira,
and went to the Aśvaśira river
for his ritual bath.

22 After Bṛhadaśva had left, Yudhiṣṭhira learnt
that Savyasācī ambidexterous Arjuna,
deep in tapasyā,
was subsisting on air.

23 He was given this information
by intelligent Brahmins and ṛṣis
who came from mountain and forest
pilgrimage-spots.

24 He heard that Arjuna was engaged
in such intense tapasyā
that none else
had ever attempted before.

25 He heard that Pārtha-Arjuna,
absorbed in tapasyā's vows
of meditation and silence,
shone like Dharma personified.

26 And when this news reached him
about his dear brother
practising such severe tapasyā in the mahā-forest,
Yudhiṣṭhira became pensive.

27 Yudhiṣṭhira sought consolation
in the mahā-forest
by talking to Brahmins
learned in the different śāstras.

28 Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma and the other brothers
were pleased
when Yudhiṣṭhira learnt
the secrets of dice-play.

29 Sitting together,
Yudhiṣṭhira saw all his brothers with him,
except Arjuna –
and this saddened him.

30 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "Bhīma,
when will I see
your younger brother Arjuna,
who is doing tapasyā for us?

31 When will I get a chance
to teach him the secrets of dice?
I know how happy tiger-among-men
Arjuna will be to learn them."

SECTION EIGHTY

1 "Revered one," asked Janamejaya,
"when my great-grandfather
Savyasācī ambidextrous Arjuna left Kāmyaka,
what did the other Pāṇḍavas do?

2 I had the impression that the great bow-expert,
army-vanquishing Arjuna
was their refuge,
as Viṣṇu is of the Ādityas.

3 How did my great-grandfathers
pass their time in the forest,
with the Indra-like hero,
never-back-turning-in-battle Arjuna gone?"

4 *Tāta*! Child (replied Vaiśampāyana),
when the powerful Pāṇḍava Arjuna
left Kamyaka,
Pāṇḍu's other sons were in despair.

5 They were so depressed
they looked like pearls
unstrung from a necklace,
or like featherless birds.

6 Without Arjuna, hero of shining glory,
the forest too
looked like the Caitraratha forest
without Kubera.

7 The Pāṇḍava tigers-among-men,
in Arjuna's absence,
led a joyless existence
in the Kāmyaka forest.

8 The mahā-chariot-warriors,
O finest of Bharatas Janamejaya,
hunted animals for Brahmins
with non-poisoned pure arrows.

9 The foe-chastising tigers-among-men
daily collected forest food
and offered it to Brahmins
respectfully.

10 O rājā, that is what the bull-brave heroes
did most of the time
after Dhanañjaya-Arjuna left them
to a cheerless existence.

11 Pāñcālī-Draupadī specially remembered
her third husband,
and she once said anxiously
to the eldest Pāṇḍava:

12 "Arjuna with two hands
was like Arjuna with many;
without that excellent Pāṇḍava,
this forest has lost its charm.

13 Wherever I look,
I see only an empty earth.
This forest, with its flowering trees,
its pleasing sights,

14 Gives me no pleasure at all,
because Savyasācī-Arjuna is absent;
his skin is the colour of darkblue clouds,
his strength an elephant's.

15 Without that lotus-eyed hero,
how insipid is the Kāmyaka forest!
I think of the thunder-roaring twang
of the bow
of ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
O rājā, and my peace is gone."

16 Mahārājā Janamejaya! Bhīma heard her
regret the absence of Arjuna,
and the great foe-vanquisher
said to Draupadī:

17 "Slim-waisted beauty, gracious lady,
the sweet words you say
are as pleasing to my mind
as drinking *amṛta*-nectar.

18 Whose arms are long, shapely,
muscular, mace-like,
marked with the scars of bow-strings,
graced with the

19 Carrying of the bow, sword,
and other weapons, braceleted;
whose arms are like two five-headed snakes –
without that tiger-among-men,
the sky itself
seems to be sunless.

20 Relying on whose mahā-prowess
the Kurus and Pāñcālas
do not fear even the most powerful
of the gods,

21 Relying on whose strength
we consider our enemies
as good as vanquished,
and the earth already conquered, –

22 Without that heroic Phālguna-Arjuna,
the Kāmyaka does not please me either.
All is empty,
all is dark.

23 Wherever I look,
I see only an emptiness."
Pāṇḍu's son Nakula said
in a voice thick with sadness:

24 "How can the forest please us
without him, finest of warriors,
whose feats are discussed
by the gods themselves?

25 Who went to the northern regions
and defeated in battle
hundreds of gandharvas,
and returned with the radiant horses

26 Of the wind-swift Tittira
and Kalmāṣa breed,
which he presented to his brother
for the Rājasūya yajna –

27 Without that excellent bowman,
Bhīma's younger brother,
without that god-like hero,
I do not wish to live in Kāmyaka."

28 Sahadeva said: "Without that hero
who defeated our enemies,
and brought back wealth and virgins
for the Rājasūya yajña,

29 Without him who,
with Vāsudeva-Krishna's approval,
single-handed routed the Yādavas
and married the beautiful Subhadrā –

30 Without him who had the courage
to invade Drupada's kingdom
in order to give his guru Droṇa
half the kingdom as *dakṣiṇā* –

31 When I see Jiṣṇu-Arjuna's grass-cot
unoccupied in our hut,
I find no pleasure
in continuing to stay here.

32 O foe-conqueror, I suggest we go
to some other forest –
this Arjuna-less forest certainly
holds no attraction for me."

SECTION EIGHTY-ONE

1 Listening to these comments
of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī and his brothers,
all concerned over Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira's worry increased.

2 One day he saw the mahātmā ṛṣi Nārada
without warning
standing radiant before him
with Brahma-effulgence,
with the splendour of the ghee-fed fire
of a yajña.

3 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
and his brothers rose
and offered pūjā-respect
to the mahā-ātmaned ṛṣi.

4 Surrounded by his brothers,
the excellent chief of the Kurus
shone like Śatakratu-Indra
among the gods.

5 Following dharma, Yājñasenī-Draupadī remained
with Parthā-Kuntī's sons,
even as Gāyatrī remains with the Vedas,
the sun with Meru.

6 Bhagavān ṛṣi Nārada
accepted their pūjā-respect
and comforted the son of Dharma
with appropriate words.

7 To mahā-ātmaned Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
he said, "Finest of men of dharma,
what do you wish
that I can give?"

8 Dharma's son Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers
all praṇāma-ed the ṛṣi,
and doing *añjali* with folded hands
Yudhiṣṭhira said to Nārada:

9 "Mahā-favoured-of-fortune,
all-worlds-worshipped ṛṣi!
That you are pleased with me,
is wish-granting enough for me.

10 O defectless lord of munis!
If I and my brothers
deserve to receive your favours,
then tell us this –

11 What is the merit obtained by a person
who travels the world over
doing *pradakṣiṇa*
in sacred places of pilgrimage?"

12 Listen, O rājā, attentively
(replied Nārada)
to what wise Bhīṣma heard
from the lips of Pulastya.

13 Long ago, when the incomparable
man of dharma Bhīṣma
was observing his *pitṛ*-vow,
he lived near the Bhāgirathī –

14 An enchanting, sacred spot, O rājā,
situated at the source of the Gaṅgā,
and visited
by gods and gandharvas.

15 The shining hero revered
the *pitṛs*, gods and ṛṣis
by offering them oblations
as laid down in the śāstras.

16 One day while he was engaged
in the practice of his vow,
he saw
the mahā-effulgent *ṛṣi* Pulastya.

17 So intense was the radiance
of the glorious ṛṣi
that Bhīṣma was filled
with both joy and wonder.

18 And the incomparable man of dharma
Bhīṣma offered pūjā-respect
as was proper to the effulgent,
adorable visitor.

19 He purified himself and, concentrating
all his faculties and placing
Brahma-ṛṣi Pulastya's *arghya*-offering on his head,
he uttered his name.

20 "May you prosper, O noble-vowed ṛṣi –
I am Bhīṣma, your servant.
Your darshan has cleansed me
of all defects."

21 Having said that, O mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
dharma-rich Bhīṣma stood there silent,
his hands reverently folded in *añjali*
before Pulastya.

22 And Pulastya was pleased to see
the eminent Kuru,
learned-in-the-Vedas Bhīṣma,
emaciated by his strict vow-observance.

SECTION EIGHTY-TWO

1 "Excellent-vowed hero,
illustrious dharma-knowing ṛṣi!"
Pulastya said, "Your humility,
truth and self-control please me.

2 Defectless son, the merit you have gained
by your regard for your *pitṛs*
has made you see me
and has earned my pleasure.

3 Greatest of Kurus, defectless Bhīṣma,
my eyes see into everything.
What is your desire?
Ask, and I will grant it."

4 "Mahā-favoured-of-fortune,
all-worlds-worshipped ṛṣi,"
replied Bhīṣma, "your darshan and your pleasure
are sufficient.

5 Finest of men of dharma,
if I have deserved your grace,
answer some questions that I have.
These doubts

6 Relate to dharma,
regarding the importance of pilgrimages.
These are my humble questions:
I would like each answered in detail.

7 O god-like ṛṣi!
Tell me, what merit is earned by a person
who does pilgrimage-*pradakṣiṇas*
all over the world?"

8 "Son, listen carefully," Pulastya replied.
"I will tell you the merits
that come from *tīrthas*
that are the refuge of ṛṣis.

9 The man whose hands, feet, mind,
learning, tapasyā and deeds
are balanced,
obtains the fruits of *tīrthas.*

10 The man who desires no gifts,
subsists on little,
and is free from egoism,
obtains the fruits of *tīrthas.*

11 The man who refrains from wrong-doing,
acts without selfish desire,
eats moderately, and controls his senses,
obtains the fruits of *tīrthas.*

12 O Indra among rājās!
The man who is free from anger,
speaks the truth, keeps his vows
and treats all as himself,
obtains the fruits of *tīrthas.*

13 The ṛṣis have explained
in great detail various yajñas,
and their fruits obtainable
in this birth and the next.

14 Lord of the earth Yudhiṣṭhira!
The poor cannot perform these yajñas,
because the rituals require
large supplies of materials of all kinds.

15 Only kings and very wealthy men
can hold these yajñas,
which need men with means,
and men with many friends.

16 But let me tell you, O lord of men,
of what can be done by the poor,
the fruits of which
equal the best yajñas.

17 O finest of the Bharatas,
excelling the performance of yajñas
is visiting sacred places.
This is the profound mystery of the ṛṣis.

18 Poor is the man who does not go on *tīrtha*,
or, having gone,
does not fast three days and nights,
or does not donate gold and cattle.

19 There is more merit acquired
in going on a *tīrtha*
than in holding an *agniṣṭoma*-yajña
full of *dakṣiṇā*.

20 The *tīrtha* named Puṣkara
after the god of gods
is famed in the three worlds;
going there one becomes mahā-blessed.

22 The Ādityas, Vasus, Rudras,
Sādhyas, and Maruts,
the gandharvas and apsarās
are always present there.

23 Mahārāja, there the gods,
the Dānavas and Brahma-ṛṣis,
after prolonged yoga,
acquired merit and divinity.

25 Mahārāja, there,
seated blissfully on a lotus
is Bhagavān Brahmā Pitāmaha,
Divine Progenitor of all creation.

26 Mahā-favoured-of-fortune,
it was in Puṣkara long ago
that the gods and ṛṣis achieved
the ultimate goal.

27 Wise men say that those
who bathe in Puṣkara
for the sake of *pitṛs* and gods
get ten times an Aśvamedha's merits.

28 Bhīṣma, the man who goes to Puṣkara
 and feeds even one Brahmin there,
finds joy
 in this life and the next.

29 The man who lives on vegetables,
 roots and fruits himself,
can offer simple food to Brahmins with śraddhā
 without any hesitation.

30 Wise men can earn an Aśwamedha's merits
 in that way.
Whether Brahmin, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya
 or Śūdra –

31 Anyone who is mahā-atmaned
 is freed from rebirth by bathing there.
The man who goes to Puṣkara
 on the full-moon

32 Night of Kārtika
 finds the undecaying abode of Brahmā.
The man who thinks of Puṣkara
 day and night with palms folded in *añjali*

33 Achieves the merit
 of bathing in all the *tīrthas.*
Whatever wrongs are done by a man or woman
 in this life

34 Are all effaced when he or she
 bathes in Puṣkara.
Just as slayer-of-Madhu Viṣṇu
 is the first of the gods,

35 Puṣkara is the first of all the *tīrthas.*
 The man who passes
twelve years of his life
 in purity at Puṣkara

36 Gets all the merits of yajnas
 and achieves Brahmā's abode.
The man who performs
 the *agnihotṛ* yajña

37 For one hundred years
gets the same merit
as the man who lives one Kārtika month
in Puṣkara.

38 There have been three hills and three streams
in Puṣkara
from time immemorial.
We do not know why it is called Puṣkara.

39 Puṣkara is hard to reach.
It is hard to practise tapasyā in Puṣkara,
hard to give charity,
hard to live in Puṣkara.

40 After passing twelve full nights in Puṣkara
on a strict diet
and walking round it,
one goes to Jambu-mārga.

41 The man who travels on the road
to Jambu,
where divine ṛṣis and *pitṛs* live,
obtains the merits
of an Aśvamedha yajña
and the fulfilment of his desires.

42 The man who lives there for five nights
is cleansed of all his wrongs.
Without obstacles,
he finds full success.

43 Leaving Jambu-mārga,
one goes to the āśrama at Tandulika;
without any obstacles,
one finds Brahmā's abode.

44 O rājā! The man who visits Agastya Lake
and worships the gods and *pitṛs*,
fasting for three nights,
gets an *agniṣṭoma's* merits.

45 And he who lives on fruits and vegetables there,
obtains Kārtikeya's realm.
From there one goes
to world-famed Kaṇva's āśrama.

46 O bull-brave Bharata,
it has been called a forest of dharma
from time immemorial.
To enter it is to be cleansed of all ill-deeds.

47 The man who observes a strict diet
and worships the gods and *pitṛs* there,
gets the fruits of yajñas
and fulfilment of his wishes.

48 He should half-circle it in *pradakṣiṇa*
and visit the spot where Yayāti fell,
Yayāti-patana.
That gives an Aśvamedha's fruits.

49 One should then go to Mahākāla
and observe strict diet and strict vows.
Bathing in Koṭi-tīrtha
gets an Aśvamedha's fruits.

50 Then the man of dharma should go
to the *tīrtha* of Sthānu-Śiva, Umā's consort,
celebrated in the three worlds
as Bhadravaṭa.

51 He will see Iśāna-Śiva there
and obtain the merits
of giving away a thousand cows;
Mahādeva-Śiva gives him world-lordship,

52 And that excellent man gets peace,
prosperity and success.
Visiting the Narmadā river
famed in the three worlds,

53 He gets the fruits of an *agniṣṭoma*-yajña
by honouring the gods and *pitṛs.*
Reaching the southern sea,
the man

54 Who practises brahmacarya obtains
an *agniṣṭoma's* fruits and finds heaven.
At Carmaṇvatī,
following a strict diet
and observing strict vows, Rantideva's command
gets him an *agniṣṭoma's* fruits.

55 Dharma-knowing Yudhiṣṭhira,
then he should go to Arvuda, Himavat's son,
where there is an ancient cavern
in the earth.

56 There one finds Vasiṣṭha's āśrama,
famed in the three worlds.
Living one night there
earns a thousand cow-gifting merit.

57 Finest of men, the man who lives
as a brahmacārī
and bathes in the Piṅga-*tīrtha*
obtains the same merit
that comes when one gives
a thousand brown *kapila* cows.

58 O Indra among rājās! From there
one should proceed to the Prabhāsa-*tīrtha*
where the god Agni
is always present.

59 He is the mouth of the gods,
the wind is his chariot.
Bathing there with restrained senses,
a man becomes pure,

60 And obtains the merits accruing
from the *agniṣṭoma* or *atīrātra* yajña.
Next, where the Sarasvatī river
meets the ocean –

61 The pilgrim there gets the fruits
of a thousand-cow gift and obtains heaven.
He acquires
the radiance of fire.

62 The man who bathes in the *tīrtha*
of the rājā-of-waters Varuṇa
and spends three nights there honouring
the gods and *pitṛs*,

63 Shines with the moon's splendour
and gets an Aśvamedha's fruits.
From there one should proceed
to Varadāna-*tīrtha*

64 Where Durvāsas gave Viṣṇu a boon.
  The man who bathes in Varadāna
obtains the fruits
  of a thousand-cow gift.

65 From there one goes to Dvāravatī,
  observing strict diet and vows.
The man who bathes in Piṇḍāraka
  gets gold-giving's merits.

66 O mahā-fortune-favoured fee-crushing hero!
  Even today one finds in that *tīrtha*
lotus-marked gold coins –
  a most wonderful sight –

67 Together with lotuses
  marked with the sign of the trident.
O bull-brave Kaurava descendant
  Mahādeva-Śiva is always present there.

68 Next is the place where the Sindhu river
  joins the ocean;
bathing in that *tīrtha* of the water-rājā,
  with restrained senses,

69 And offering oblations to the gods,
  pitṛs, and ṛṣis,
one obtains the regions of Varuṇa
  and shines in splendour.

70 Yudhiṣṭhira, it is the opinion of wise men
  that worship of Śaṅkukarṇeśvara-Śiva
obtains the merits
  of ten Aśvamedha yajñas.

71 O bull-brave Bharata-Yudhiṣṭhira,
  after half-circling round it in *pradakṣiṇa,*
one should proceed to the *tīrtha*
  famed in the three worlds,

72 Known as Dami, which has the power
  to cleanse all misdeeds;
it was here that Brahmā and the gods
  propitiated Maheśvara-Śiva.

73 Bathing in it and worshipping
Rudra-Śiva and the gods there,
all the wrongs done since one's birth
are removed.

74 All the gods acknowledge
the supremacy of Damī.
Bathing here earns one the merits
of an Aśvamedha yajña.

75 Mahā learned hero, O rājā,
it was here Viṣṇu the all-powerful
purified himself
after killing the Daityas and Dānavas.

76 O dharma-knowing one! After this,
one should go to Vasudhārā, worshipped by all;
the pilgrim here gets the merits
of an Aśvamedha yajña.

77 After bathing there
with serene and self-controlled mind,
and honouring gods and *pitṛs,*
one is honoured in the realm of Viṣṇu.

78 O bull-brave Bharata, there is in that *tīrtha*
a holy lake of the Vasus.
Drinking its water and bathing in it
makes one Vasu-respected.

79 It is known as Sindhūttama,
it effaces all wrongs.
Bathing in it brings one the merit
of giving gold-gifts.

80 A pilgrim to Bhadratuṅga
who has a pure heart
obtains the ultimate experience
and goes to Brahmā's realm.

81 There is the *tīrtha* called Kumārikā of Śakra-Indra
where the perfected mortals, Siddhas go;
bathing there gets one
the heavenly realm.

[III:82:82-90]

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82 Another *tīrtha* called Reṇukā
is favoured by the Siddhas.
Bathing in it makes a Brahmin
as spotless as the moon.

83 Going to the Five Rivers
with strict vows and a strict diet
gets one the śāstra-noted merits
of five yajñas.

84 O Indra-among-rājās!
From there one should proceed to Bhīma-*tīrtha*;
bathing in the Yonī there,
O finest of the Bharatas,

85 A man becomes a goddess's son,
and wears pearl-set ear-rings;
he also earns the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

86 In Śrīkuṇḍa,
known all over the three worlds,
bowing to Brahmā earns one the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

87 O wise-in-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira!
From there one should go
to the *tīrtha* called Vimala, where even today
one can see silver and gold fish;

88 Bathing in it, a man achieves
the realm of Indra;
with all his wrongs washed clean,
he attains perfection.

89 Then the *tirtha* of Vitastā,
where offerings to gods and *pitṛs*
obtain for the pilgrim the merits
of the Vājapeya yajña.

90 Vitastā is in Kāśmīra,
and it is the abode
of the Nāga Takṣaka;
it can cleanse all one's wrong-doings.

91 Bathing there definitely obtains
the merits of the Vājapeya yajña;
his ātman purified,
the pilgrim achieves the perfect goal.

92 After this one should go to the Vaḍavā-*tīrtha,*
famed in the three worlds.
After bathing there
in the evening-*saṁdhyā,*

93 One should offer rice boiled in milk and butter
to the seven-flamed god.
A gift offered to the *pitṛs* here
is inexhaustible.

94 Here the ṛṣis, *pitṛs*, gods,
gandharvas, apsarās,
Guhyakas, Kinnaras, Yakṣas,
Siddhas, Vidyādharas, humans

95 Rākṣasas, Daityas, Rudras,
and Brahmā himself, O lord of men,
controlled their senses and offered worship
for a thousand years.

96 In order to win the grace of Viṣṇu;
they cooked *caru* here
and propitiated Keśava-Viṣṇu
with seven Vedic mantras;

97 Keśava-Viṣṇu, pleased, bestowed on them
the eightfold qualities
called Aiśvarya and gave them
whatever they wished to obtain,

98 And then the divinity vanished
like a flash of lightning.
That is why the place
is called Sapta-caru.

99 If seven *carus* are offered here,
more merit accrues than a thousand-cow gift,
one hundred Rājasūyas
and one thousand Aśvamedhas.

100 From here one should proceed to Rudrapada;
worshipping Mahādeva-Śiva there
earns one the merit
of an Aśvamedha yajña.

102 After this one goes to Devikā,
famous the world over.
O bull-brave Bharata, it is said
the Brahmin caste came into existence here.

103 Here is the place
sacred to trident-wielding Śiva,
famous the world over. Bathing in Devikā
and worshipping Maheśvara-Śiva,

104 And offering *caru* to the other gods,
O bull-brave Bharata,
makes one obtain the fruits of yajñas
that satisfy all desires.

105 There is another *tīrtha* of Rudra-Śiva
called Kāmākhya, where gods live.
Bathing in it brings a man total perfection,
O Bharata descendant.

106 By going there and worshipping,
and touching the sand,
water, and flowers there,
one is freed from grief and death.

107 The sacrificial ground there,
which gods and ṛṣis frequent,
is five *yojanas* long
and half a *yojana* broad.

108 From there one should go
to Dīrghasatra-*tīrtha*;
there Brahmā and the gods,
the Siddhas and ṛṣis

109 Performed the *dīrghasatra*
or prolonged sacrifice,
after making the necessary preparations
as ordained in the śāstras.

110 O foe-chastising Indra-among-rājās,
the pilgrim to Dīrghasatra
obtains the fruits
of Rājasūya and Aśvamedha.

111 One should go next with a serene maid
to Vināśana,
where the Sarasvatī flows
from an unseen source on Meru,

112 And appears in Camasa, Śivodbheda,
and Nāgodbheda.
Bathing in Camasodbheda
one gets the fruits of an *agniṣṭoma.*

113 Bathing in Śivodbheda earns the fruits
of a thousand-cow gift;
bathing in Nāgodbheda takes one
to the realm of the Nāgas.

114 O Indra-among-rājās, next one should go
to the remote *tīrtha* called Śaśayana.
There one can see cranes
transformed into hares

115 Appearing on the full-moon night of Kārtika;
mahārāja,
there one should bathe in the Sarasvatī;
O incomparable Bharata,

116 O bull-brave Bharata, by bathing there,
O tiger-among-men,
one becomes luminous like the moon
and earns the merits of a thousand-cow gift.

117 From there one goes with serene mind
to Kumārakoṭi,
bathing and worshipping the gods
and the *pitṛs.*

118 This earns the merit of a thousand-cow gift,
O dharma-learned one.
From there one proceeds to the *tīrtha*
called Rudrakoṭi,

119 Where in the ancient past, mahārāja,
a crore of ṛṣis gathered,
ecstatically awaiting a darshan
of Rudra-Śiva;

120 And they each exclaimed,
"I have seen Vṛṣabhadhvaja-Śiva!"
"I saw the god first!"
"I saw the god first!"

121 In order to prevent
further confusion and quarrel
among the self-controlled ṛṣis,
Yogeśvara-Śiva by his power of yoga

122 Multiplied himself into a crore of forms
so that each of the ṛṣis
was convinced
his was the first darshan

123 O rājā! Pleased with the bhakti
of mind-subdued munis,
Mahādeva-Śiva gave them
a special boon:

124 "From this day your dharma
will grow in strength."
O tiger-among-men,
bathing in the waters of Rudrakoṭi

125 Earns the merits of an Aśvamedha
and the salvation of one's family.
One should then go
to the Saṁgama-*tīrtha*,

126 A place of great sanctity,
where the Sarasvatī joins the sea.
Here Keśava-Viṣṇu is worshipped by Brahmā,
gods, ṛṣis, and tapasyā-rich ascetics.

127 On the fourteenth day
of the bright fortnight of Caitra,
bathing there earns the merits
of much wealth-donation.
All wrongs cleansed, the ātman purified,
one goes to Brahmā's realm.

128 There the ṛṣis performed various sacrifices.
O lord of men,
in this Avasāna-*tīrtha* one gets the fruits
of a thousand-cow gift.

SECTION EIGHTY-THREE

1 O Indra-among-rājās (Pulastya continued),
then one should go to Kurukṣetra,
whose darshan removes
all wrong-doing.

2 The person who repeatedly says,
"I will go to Kurukṣetra,
I will stay in Kurukṣetra,"
is cleansed of his wrongs.

3 The wind-blown dust of Kurukṣetra
has the power
to take the most heinous wrong-doer
to the state of perfection.

4 The man who lives in Kurukṣetra,
which is south of the Sarasvatī
and north of the Dṛṣadvatī,
lives in heaven.

5 Yudhiṣṭhira, one should stay one month
where the river Sarasvatī flows.
Brahmā, gods,
ṛṣis, Siddhas, Cāraṇas,

6 Gandharvas, apsarās, Yakṣas, Nāgas –
all these, O descendant of Bharata,
often go
to mahā-sacred Kurukṣetra.

7 The wrongs of the man who merely desires
to go there
are wiped out, and he finds himself
in the realm of Brahmā.

8 O continuer of the Kuru race,
the man who with śraddhā
visits Kurukṣetra obtains the merits
of Rājasūya and Aśvamedha.

9 After greeting the maha-powerful doorkeeper,
the Yakṣa Macakruka,
one obtains the fruits
of a thousand-cow gift.

10 O dharma-knowing king! O Indra-among-rājās!
One should proceed to Viṣṇu's supreme *tīrtha,*
the Satata,
where Hari-Viṣṇu is always present.

11 Bathing there and worshipping
the three-worlds-preserver Hari-Viṣṇu,
one gets the merits of the Aśvamedha
and goes to Viṣṇu's realm.

12 There is next the *tīrtha* named Pāriplava,
famed in the three worlds,
whose merits are greater than those
of the *agniṣṭoma* and atiratra yajñas.

13 Then comes the *tīrtha* called Pṛthivī,
whose merits equal a thousand-cow gift.
Ruler of men,
going to Śālukinī,

14 And bathing in the Daśāśvamedha,
one gets an Aśvamedha's merits.
After this one should go
to the Naga *tīrtha*, Sarpadevī,

15 Obtain the merits of an *agniṣṭoma*,
and achieve the realm of the Nāgas.
One should approach
the doorkeeper Tarantuka,

16 And stay there a night, and obtain the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.
Then to Pañcanada,
with a serene mind,

17 And bathe in the Koṭi-*tīrtha*,
and get the merits of an Aśvamedha.
The *tīrtha* called Aśvinī
gives beauty of looks.

18 O dharma-learned one! From there one should go
to the *tīrtha* called Varāha,
where Viṣṇu lived in the form
of a boar-avatāra.

19 Bathing there, one earns the merits
of an *agniṣṭoma*,
Next is the Soma-*tīrtha*, near Jayantī;
O Indra-among-rājās;

20 Bathing in it earns for a man
a Rājasūya's merits.
Bathing in Ekahaṁsa earns the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

21 A pilgrimage to Kṛtaśauca
earns the grace
of the lotus-eyed divinity Viṣṇu,
and purifies the ātman.

22 The place of Sthāṇu-Śiva
is called Muñjavaṭa –
if one stays a night there,
one becomes a lord of people.

23 A famous *tīrtha* is called the Yakṣiṇī;
bathing in it,
O Indra among rājās,
satisfies all one's desires.

24 It is known, O bull-brave Bharata,
as the site of Kurukṣetra,
and the serene-minded pilgrim
should circumambulate it in *pradakṣiṇa*.

25 It was established
by the shining son of Jamadagni,
Paraśurāma;
it is pure like Puṣkara-*tīrtha*;

26 Bathing in it and worshipping
gods and *pitṛs*
earns an Aśvamedha's merits.
Then one should go to Rāmahlada.

27 The illustrious hero Paraśurāma
is said to have exterminated the Kṣatriyas
and dug five lakes,
O Indra-among-rājās,

28 Which we are told
he filled with their blood;
O tiger-among-men, he offered the blood
as oblation to his forefathers and *pitṛs*.

29 The *pitṛs*, gratified, said to Paraśurāma:
"Rāma, Rāma,
mahā-auspicious Bhārgava descendant,
you have pleased us

30 With your *pitṛ*-bhakti
and marvellous prowess.
May you prosper!
What boon would you like from us?"

31 Paraśurāma, foremost of fighters,
did *añjali* before them,
and said to the *pitṛs*
who spoke from the sky:

32 "If your pleasure merits me a favour,
all I wish is
that I may again practise
self-control and tapasyā.

33 Let your grace wipe out
the wrathfully wrought crime
that I have been guilty of
by angrily exterminating the Kṣatriyas.

34 And let these lakes become *tīrthas*
famous the world over."
The *pitṛs* heard the gracious
auspicious words of Paraśurāma

35 And were pleased;
joyfully they said to Paraśurāma,
"May your tapasyā be as strong
as your *pitṛ*-bhakti.

36 You wiped out the Kṣatriyas in anger –
but that ill deed
has been already cleansed –
for they worked out their own doom.

37 These lakes will certainly be *tīrthas*.
The man who bathes
in these lakes
and offers oblation to the *pitṛs*,

38 Makes the *pitṛs* pleased with him.
They will grant him
hard-to-achieve wishes,
and lead him to the divine realms."

39 Having granted this boon,
the *pitṛs* bid Paraśurāma farewell
and disappeared, leaving Bhṛgu's son
standing there alone.

40 That is the reason behind the holiness
of these Rāmahlada lakes.
Living like a brahmacārī
and observing holy vows,

41 Bathing in these lakes of Paraśurāma
and worshipping Paraśurāma,
earns gold-giving's merits.
Going to Vaṁśamūlaka-*tīrtha*,

42 The pilgrim secures the safety of his race
by bathing there.
One should go next
to Kāyaśodhana-*tīrtha*,

43 Bathe there and purify one's body.
With a purified body,
one is able to enter
the perfect realms of joy.

44 Next is the Lokodhāra *tīrtha*,
celebrated in all the three worlds;
this is where Viṣṇu
guarded the worlds.

45 Going to the Lokodhāra-*tīrtha*
famous in the three worlds,
and bathing in it
earns many worlds for the pilgrim.

46 Next is the Śrī-*tīrtha*;
bathing there with serene mind
and worshipping the gods and *pitṛs*
brings a man great prosperity.

47 Living like a brahmacārī
and with a serene mind,
if a pilgrim goes to Kapila,
bathes, worships the gods and *pitṛs*,

48 He will obtain the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.
If he goes with a serene mind
to Sūrya, and bathes

49 There, fasts and worships
the gods and *pitṛs*,
he obtains the merits of an *agniṣṭoma*
and reaches the realm of Sūrya.

50 Next comes Gobhavana;
if one goes there and bathes,
he will earn the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

51 O finest of the Kurus!
Bathing in the Devī-*tīrtha*
brings a man
the most excellent fulfilment.

52 O Indra-among-rājās, one should approach
the gate-keeper Arantu
of the Yakṣa-lord's *tīrtha*
beside the river Sarasvatī;

53 Bathing in it earns one the merits
of an *agniṣṭoma.*
O Indra among rājās,
the next *tīrtha* is Brahmāvarta;

54 Bathing in the Brahmāvarta gets a man
the realm of Brahmā.
One should proceed
to the Su-*tīrtha,*

55 Where the *pitṛs* are always present
along with the gods;
bathing in its waters and worshipping
the gods and *pitṛs,*

56 One earns an Aśvamedha's merits
and attains Brahmā's realm.
From there one should proceed
to excellent Ambumatī.

57 Bathing in the *tīrtha* of Kāśīśvara,
one is freed
from all infirmities;
one is worshipped in Brahmā's realm.

58 There is also the Mātṛ-*tīrtha;*
bathing in its waters
brings the pilgrim prolific progeny
and profound success.

59 One should go with serene mind
and following a strict diet
to Sītavana –
a uniquely holy *tīrtha.*

60 O lord of men, a man is purified
simply by going there.
If one shaves one's hair there,
he achieves holiness.

61 There is a spot there known as
Śvāvilpomapaha;
learned Brahmins
who often visit *tīrthas.*

62 Are overjoyed merely to bathe in it.
Great Bharata,
shaving their heads
at Śvāvilpomapaha,

63 The excellent Brahmins
acquire holiness by yogic breathing;
their ātmans purified,
they achieve perfection.

64 O tiger-among-men,
there also can be found
the Daśāśvamedhika-*tīrtha*;
bathing in it brings perfection.

65 One should then go to Manuṣa,
famed in the three worlds.
Some black deer,
pierced by arrows,

66 Jumped in its waters –
and were changed into human beings.
Bathing there with the serene mind
of a brahmacārī

67 Brings cleansing from all wrong-doing;
with ātman purified,
he finds Brahmā. East of Manuṣa,
one *krośa* away,

68 Is the famous river Apaga,
where Siddhas can be seen.
The man who makes
a holy millet-offering

69 To the gods and *pitṛs* there
earns enormous dharma.
One Brahmin fed there equals a crore
fed elsewhere.

70 Bathing there and worshipping
the gods and *pitṛs,*
and staying a night there,
has the merits of an *agniṣṭoma.*

71 O Indra-among-rājās, brave Bharata,
one should next proceed
to the marvellous region of Brahmā
called Brahmodumbara.

72 Bathing in the Lakes of the Seven Ṛṣis
and in the *tīrtha*
of mahātmā Kapila
called Kedāra,

73 With a serene mind
and a pure heart,
one gets all one's wrong-doing erased,
and reaches Brahmā's realm.

74 Going to remote hard-of-access
Kedāra of Kapila,
and burning one's defects by tapasyā,
one achieves the power of invisibility.

75 The next *tīrtha* is Saraka, O Indra-among-rājās,
famous in the three worlds.
A darshan of Vṛṣadhvaja-Śiva there
on the dark fortnight's fourteenth day

76 Gives all that one desires,
and leads to heaven.
O descendant of Kuru,
there are three crore *tīrthas* in Saraka,

77 Rudrakoṭi, and the various wells and lakes.
Great Bharata descendant,
there one can see
the great *tīrtha* called Ilāspada.

78 Bathing in it and worshipping
the gods and *pitṛs*
makes all misfortunes vanish,
and obtains an *agniṣṭoma's* merits.

79 Descendant of Bharata,
by bathing in Kiṁdāna and Kiṁjapya,
one obtains the merits of countless gifts
and limitless holy recitations.

80 Bathing in Kalaśī-*tīrtha*
with *śraddhā* and with one's senses controlled,
earns the merits
of an *agniṣṭoma*.

81 Towards the east of Saraka
is the holy *tīrtha* of Nārada,
known, great Bhārata,
as Ambājanma.

82 By bathing in that *tīrtha,*
a man attains,
by Nārada's favour,
the realms of after-death perfection.

83 On the tenth day of the bright fortnight,
one should go to Puṇḍarīka;
having bathed,
he earns Puṇḍarīka;

84 From there one should go
to the Triviṣṭapa-*tīrtha,*
famed in the three worlds,
where flows sin-cleansing Vaitaraṇī.

85 Bathing in the river and worshipping
the trident-wielding buffalo-riding-flagged Śiva
one's wrong-doings are cancelled,
and one reaches perfection.

86 One should proceed next to Phalakīvana;
the gods, it is said,
can always be seen in Phalakīvana,
O Indra-among-rājās,

87 And continuously do tapasyā there.
Bathing in the Dṛṣadvatī,
and worshipping the gods,
a pilgrim

88 Obtains merits greater than those
of the *agniṣṭoma* and *atirātra* sacrifices.
Bathing in the *tīrtha*
called Sarvadeva,

89 A pilgrim obtains the merits
of a thousand-cow gift:
Bathing in the Paṇikhāta
and worshipping the gods, a pilgrim

90 Obtains merits greater than those
of the *agniṣṭoma* and *atirātra* sacrifies;
he also gets the Rājasūya's merits,
and attains the ṛṣi-realms.

91 O Indra-among-rājās! After this one should go
to the excellent *tīrtha* Miśraka;
it is said that in the *tīrtha* of Miśraka,
mahā-ātmaned

92 Vyāsa combined all the *tīrthas*
for the sake of Brahmins,
so that the pilgrim bathing in Miśraka
bathes in all *tīrthas.*

93 One should go with a serene mind
to Vyāsavana;
bathing in its Manojava earns the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

94 Then the Devī-*tīrtha* in Madlhuvaṭi –
a pilgrim bathing there
and offering worship to the gods
and the *pitṛs*

95 Gets, by the grace of the gods,
the merits of a thousand-cow gift.
The pilgrim who, at the confluence
of Kauṣikī and Dṛṣadvatī

96 Bathes after strict dieting
is freed from all wrong-doings.
Next is the *tīrtha* called Vyāsasthalī
where profoundly wise Vyāsa,

97 Anguished with grief for his son,
made up his mind, O Indra-among-rājās,
not to live, and was persuaded against it
by the gods.

98 Going to Vyāsasthalī gets the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.
If one offers sixteen fistfuls
of seasame seed in

99 The Kiṁdatta well, he is freed of his debts
and finds perfection.
Bathing in Vedī-*tīrtha* gets the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

100 Two very famous *tīrthas*
are Ahan and Sudina.
Bathing in them takes a pilgrim
to the realms of Sūrya.

101 One should then go to Mṛgadhūma,
famed in the three worlds;
there one should bathe
in the holy Gaṅgā.

102 Worshipping Mahādeva-Śiva there
gets an Aśvamedha's merits;
bathing in the Devī gets the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

103 Next is the *tīrtha* called Vāmanaka,
famed in the three worlds;
bathing in the Viṣṇupada
and worshipping Vāmana,

104 One is freed from all wrong-doings
and with pure atman finds Viṣṇu's realm.
Bathing in the Kulampuna
purifies one's family.

105 Proceed to Pavana Lake,
where there is Marut-*tīrtha*;
by bathing in it one reaches
the regions of Vayu.

106 Bathing in Amara Lake
and worshipping the Undying Lord,
the pilgrim finds heaven
through the grace of the immortals.

107 Bathing the Śālisūrya-*tīrtha*
of Śāhihotra,
one gets the merits, O Bharata,
of a thousand-cow gift.

108 By bathing in the Śrīkuñja-*tīrtha*
of the Sarasvatī, O finest of the Bharatas,
one obtains the merits
of an *agniṣṭoma* yajña.

109 Great Kuru progenitor, one should next go
to the Naimiṣa-kuñja-*tīrtha*;
holy ṛṣis in the past
left Naimiṣa,

110 And went on a pilgrimage
that took them to Kurukṣetra;
there on the banks of the Sarasvatī,
they planted a grove,

111 Where they rested and found peace
and happiness:
bathing in that grove earns the merits
of an *agniṣṭoma* yajña.

112 O dharma-learned one! Next is the excellent *tīrtha*
called Kanyā;
bathing in the Kanyā earns the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

113 O Indra-among-rājās! Then one should go
to the excellent *tīrtha* called Brahmā;
bathing in the Brahmā confers Brahmin-status
on the three other castes.

114 If a Brahmin bathe in the Brahmā,
his ātman is purified
and he finds perfection.
Next is the excellent Soma-*tīrtha;*

115 By bathing there a pilgrim attains
the realm of Soma.
O rājā! One should next go to the *tīrtha*
of Sapta-sārasvata,

116 Where the mahā-ṛṣi Maṅkaṇaka
found ascetic perfection;
it has been said that in the past
Maṅkaṇaka cut his finger

117 On a blade of kuśa-grass,
and out flowed sap instead of blood.
When he saw sap trickling,
he whirled in joy,

118 And even as he danced,
all the moving and unmoving life
of the world, dazed,
danced with him.

119 O rājā! Brahmā and the gods and tapasyā-rich ṛṣis
hurried to Mahādeva-Śiva
and informed him of all
that had happened.

120 "Divine One! You should prevent him
from dancing as he does."
Śiva went to the ecstatic dancing ṛṣi
and, for the sake of the gods,

121 Said: "*Bho*! *Bho*!
Mahā-ṛṣi, why are you dancing?
O foremost of munis of dharma,
what makes you so happy today?"

122 "I do tapasyā, O excellent Brahmin,"
replied the ṛṣi,
"I follow the path of dharma.
Look, Brahmin,
can't you see sap flowing
from my finger?

123 I see the sap flowing
and I dance."
To the joy-blinded ṛṣi,
smiling Śiva said:

124 "I am not surprised.
Look at me!"
And as he said this, O finest of men,
O king, Mahādeva-Śiva

125 Pressed his thumb with the tip
of his forefinger –
and from it fell a heap
of snow-white ashes.

126 O rājā! The humbled ṛṣi saw this
and fell at Śiva's feet.
He realised there was none greater
or better than Rudra Śiva:

127 "Wielder of the trident!
Refuge of the gods and anti-gods!
Refuge of the universe!
Creator of the moving
And unmoving life of the worlds!

128 You who swallow all life
At the end of a yuga!
Even the gods
Are unable to know you –
How can I?

129 Immaculate one!
Brahmā and the gods
Are hidden in you!
You are all,
You are the Creator,
The Sustainer of the Universe!

130 Through your grace
The gods exist without fear or sorrow!"
Worshipping Mahādeva-Śiva in this way,
The ṛṣi said:

131 "O God of gods! Mahādeva!
Grant me your grace
That my tapasyā may increase."
Śiva, pleased,
Said to the Brahmā-ṛṣi:

132 "Brahmin, your tapasyā
will increase a thousandfold
through my grace.
I will live with you in your āśrama.

133 Those who bathe in the Sapta-sārasvata
and worship me
will get everything, however difficult,
here and in the next birth.

134 They will reach the realm
of Sarasvatī."
Mahādeva-Śiva said this, and instantly
disappeared from sight.

135 Next one should proceed
to the *tīrtha* called Auśanasa,
famed the world over,
where Brahmā, gods and ṛṣis,

136 And shining Kārtikeya, eager to do good
to the Bhārgava, Śukrācārya,
are present at the time
of the three saṃdhyā-meditations.

137 Bathing in the *tīrtha* called Kapāla-mocana
is to be freed of all one's wrong-doings,
for that *tīrtha*, O tiger-among-men,
has defect-cleansing powers.

138 Then one should go to *tīrtha*
named Agni;
bathing there one reaches the realm of Agni,
and redeems one's race.

139 O first of the Bharatas,
bathing in the *tīrtha* of Viśvāmitra,
one is said to achieve
the status of a Brahmin.

140 Going with a pure and disciplined mind
to Brahma-yoni-*tīrtha,*
one succeeds in reaching
the realm of Brahmā.

141 In this way he achieves holiness
for seven generations, past and future.
Then he should go
to the world-celebrated

142 *Tīrtha* in Kartikeya's honour
called the Pṛthūdaka;
by bathing there and worshipping the gods
and the *pitṛs*,

143 Whatever impure acts
a man or a woman has done,
out of human weakness,
consciously or unconsciously,

144 Are all destroyed, O Bharata.
He or she obtains
the merits of an Aśvamedha yajña
and goes to heaven.

145 Kuruksetra is most holy;
holier is Sarasvatī;
holier than Sarasvatī are all *tīrthas* together;
holiest is Pṛthūdaka.

146 The pilgrim who, intoning *japa*,
casts off his body in Pṛthūdaka,
holiest of *tīrtha*s,
achieves deathlessness.

147 Its praises have been sung
by mahā-ātmaned Vyāsa and Sanatkumāra;
O rājā, one should go there
with a serene mind.

148 O perpetuator of the Kurus!
No *tīrtha* excels Pṛthūdaka;
Pṛthūdaka is pure,
purifying, all-perfect.

149 Wise men say that bathing
in the Pṛthūdaka
takes even vicious men to heaven.
O finest among men,

150 O excellent Bhārata!
There is another *tīrtha* called Madhusrava;
bathing there obtains the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

151 After this, O Indra-among-rājās, one should go
to the renowned, sacred *tīrtha*
where the Sarasvatī and Aruṇā rivers
commingle.

152 The man who bathes there
and fasts for three nights,
is cleansed even of Brahmin-murder.
He obtains merits
higher than those of *agniṣṭoma*
and *atirātra* yajñas,

153 And he saves his family for seven generations,
past and future.
Noble Kuru,
another *tīrtha* is called Ardhakīla,

154 Which was established by the ascetic Darbhī
long ago
out of compassion for Brahmins.
Vows, fasts, the sacred thread,

155 Rituals, and mantras make one a Brahmin.
O bull-brave hero,
it has been observed by the ancients
that by bathing there
even ritual-less and mantra-less men
become learned and get vows' merits.

156 Darbhi brought four seas there.
By bathing in them,
one is able to avert the impact
of any calamity,

157 And obtain the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.
Then the pious pilgrim should go
to Śatasahasraka.

158 There are two *tīrthas* in that place:
Śatasahasra and Sāhasraka;
bathing in either obtains the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

159 Fasts and gifts multiply there
by themselves – in thousands.
After this, one should go
to Reṇukā *tīrtha.*

160 Bathing there and worshipping
the gods and *pitṛs,*
the ātman is purified,
and one obtains an *agniṣṭoma's* merits.

161 Bathing in the *tīrtha* called Vimocana,
with disciplined mind and senses,
one washes away
gift-taking's demerits.

162 Going to Pañcavaṭī as a brahmacārī,
a pilgrim becomes virtuous
and reaches
the realm of the virtuous.

163 There the Lord of Yoga, Vṛsabhadhvaja,
bull-bannered Śiva himself, is present;
worshipping the god of gods Sthāṇu-Śiva,
the pilgrim attains complete fulfilment.

164 There is the *tīrtha* called Taijasa,
dedicated to self-shining Varuṇa;
there Brahmā
and the other gods.

165 Appointed Kārtikeya general
of the army of the gods.
East of Taijasa, O finest of the Kauravas,
is the *tīrtha* called Kuru.

166 Bathing in Kuru-*tīrtha*
with the serene mind of a brahmacārī,
ātman-purified,
one reaches Brahmā's realm.

167 Observing strict diet and with serene mind
one should go to Svargadvāra,
get the merits of a thousand-cow gift
and reach Brahmā.

168 O rājā! Lord of men! Next is the *tirtha* called Anaraka;
bathing in its waters
ensures that no calamity
will ever befall the pilgrim.

169 Ruler of the world, tiger-among-men, Brahmā himself,
accompanied by the gods headed by Nārāyaṇa,
is always present
in that *tirtha.*

170 O perpetuator of the Kaurava race!
The wife of Rudra-Śiva Durgā
is also present there; the presence of that devī
averts all evils, O Indra-among-rājās.

171 Mahārāja, that is the place of Viśveśvara-Śiva
and of Rudra-Śiva's wife Umā;
the pilgrim to Anaraka is cleansed
of all his ill-deeds.

172 Mahārāja! Foe-crushing hero!
Standing in the presence
of lotus-navelled Nārāyaṇa,
the pilgrim shines and reaches the realm of Viṣṇu.

173 O bull-brave hero! After visiting the *tirtha*
of the various gods, and bathing in them,
a pilgrim is freed of sorrows,
and shines like the moon.

174 After that the pilgrim should go
to Svastipura,
circumambulate it in *pradakṣiṇa,*
and earn the merits of a thousand-cow gift.

175 Going to the *tirtha* called Pāvana
and worshipping the gods and pitṛs,
one obtains the merits
of an *agniṣṭoma* yajña.

176 O bull-brave Bharata,
there one finds the well of Gaṅgā;
three crores of *tirthas* are concentrated
in that holy well.

177 Bathing there takes the pilgrim
to the world of heaven;
bathing in Āpagā and worshipping
Maheśvara-Śiva,

178 A man attains lordship of all creatures
and redeems his family.
One should go
to world-celebrated Sthāṇuvaṭa;

179 Bathing there,
one goes to the realm of Rudra-Śiva.
Next is Badarīpacana,
the āśrama of Vasiṣṭha.

180 A pilgrim should fast there for three nights,
or subsist only on jujubes;
the man who subsists on jujubes
for twelve years

181 And the man who fasts there for three nights,
get equal merits.
Then the pilgrim should go
to Rudramārga;

182 One night spent in fasting there
will get him the world of Indra.
Then he should go
to Ekarātra,

183 And live there a day and a night
in strict vows and truth-speaking;
he will be worshipped
in Brahmā's realm.

184 There is also the āśrama
of brilliantly-effulgent Āditya.
Bathing in it and offering pūjā
to the god of splendour,

185 The pilgrim achieves the realm of Soma
and redeems his family.
Bathing in the Soma-*tīrtha,*
the pilgrim

186 Achieves without any doubt
the realm of Soma.
O dharma-knowing one!
Then one should proceed to mahātmā Dadhīca's

187 *Tīrtha* called Pāvana, famed all over the world.
Here was born Aṅgiras,
a veritable ocean of tapasyā,
born of Sarasvatī.

188 Bathing in Pāvana earns the merits
of an Aśvamedha,
and the pilgrim confidently attains
the realm of Sarasvatī.

189 One should go with the disciplined life
of a brahmacārī
to Kanyāśrama;
three nights there spent in serene living

190 Obtain for the pilgrim
one hundred divine girls,
and he attains Brahmā's realm.
Next is the Saṁnihatī;

191 Brahmā and the other gods
and ṛṣis of great tapasyā
visit that *tīrtha* every month
and earn vast merit

192 Bathing in Saṁnihatī
during a period of solar eclipse
gets one the everlasting merits
of an Aśvamedha yajña.

193 Wherever there is a *tīrtha,*
on earth or in the sky –
rivers, lakes, ponds, springs –
wherever there are

194 Large and small tanks
or any other *tīrthas* sacred to the gods –
people flock there
on the full-moon days,

195 To bathe in the Saṁnihatī,
 to unite themselves in its waters –
hence the name,
 "Where the Elements Join".

196 O lord of the earth! The pilgrim who bathes there
 and drinks its water
is worshipped in heaven.
 During a solar eclipse,

197 If a man bathe
 and perform *srāddha* there –
he will obtain the merits
 of a thousand Aśvamedhas.

198 As soon as a man or woman bathes
 in this *tīrtha*
and performs the *śrāddha* ceremony,
 without any doubt

199 His or her wrong-doings – all of them –
 are erased,
and he or she goes to Brahmā's realm
 in a lotus-coloured chariot.

200 Bathing in the Koṭi-*tīrtha* after worshipping
 the Yakṣa doorkeeper Macakruka,
one gets the merits
 of massive gold donations.

201 O finest of the Bharatas, if a man bathe
 with the serene mind of a brahmacārī
in the *tīrtha* of Gaṅgā's Pool,
 O dharma-learned Yudhiṣṭhira,

202 He obtains the merits of a Rājasūya
 and an Aśvamedha.
On earth the *tīrtha* called Naimiṣa,
 in the sky the Puṣkara,

203 But the greatest in all the three worlds
 is Kurukṣetra;
even the dust of Kurukṣetra,
 blown by the wind,

204 Can transport a vicious man
to a state of perfection.
North of this *tirtha* flows the Dṛṣadvatī,
south the Sarasvatī.

205 The man living here lives in heaven.
If a man say once,
"I will go to Kurukṣetra,"
he will be cleansed of all his misdeeds.

206 Holy Kurukṣetra, revered by the gods,
is Brahmā's sacred altar.
Humans who live there
are untouched by sorrow.

207 Between Tarantuka and Arantuka is Kurukṣetra,
between Paraśurāma's lake and Macakruka;
it is also called Samantapañcaka,
it is Pitāmaha Brahmā's northern altar.

SECTION EIGHTY-FOUR

1 One should proceed next
to the *tirtha* called Dharma
where mahā-fortune-favoured Dharma
performed his tapasyā.

2 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! That is the reason
it became famous as a holy *tirtha*
named after him.
Bathing there with serene mind,

3 A man saves his family for seven generations,
past and future.
From there one should go,
to Jñāna-pāvana,

4 Where the merits of an *agniṣṭoma* are obtained,
and the realm of munis achieved.
From there
to Saugandhika-vana, O rājā,

5 Where Brahmā, tapasyā-rich ṛṣis,
Siddhas, Cāraṇas,
gandharvas, Kinnaras, and mahā-Nāgas
are known to live.

6 Merely to enter it
is to be cleansed of all ill-deeds.
There flows that excellent river
of all rivers,

7 The mahā-sacred Sarasvatī,
known there as Plakṣa-devī;
one should bathe in its waters
as they flow down the ant-hill.

8 Worshipping the gods and *pitṛs* there
obtains the fruits of an Aśvamedha.
A remote *tīrtha*
is the Īśānādhyuṣita,

9 Which lies six sacrificial *śami* stick-throws away
from the ant-hill.
The Purāṇas say
that bathing in its waters,

10 O tiger-among-men, obtains the merits
of a thousand-*kapila*-cow-gift and an Aśvamedha.
Next are Sugandhā,
Śatakumbhā and Pañcayajñā;

11 The pilgrim who visits them, O finest of men,
is worshipped in heaven.
From there one should go
to the *tīrtha* named Triśūla;

12 Bathing there and worshipping
the gods and *pitṛs*,
one attains Gaṇapati-hood
after casting off his body.

13 Then one should go to the divine region
of the Devī
which is celebrated in the three worlds
as Śākambharī.

14 For one thousand god-years,
O ruler of men,
the strict-vowed Devī subsisted
only on herbs.

15 Many tapasyā-rich ascetics devoted to her
came there,
and she gave them the hospitality
of herb-food,

16 Which is why the *tīrtha*
is called "Herbal Strength";
going there with the devotion
of a brahmacārī,

17 And subsisting there three nights
only on herbs,
the pilgrim gets the power
of surviving on herbs

18 For twelve years. O Bharata descendant,
one should go next
to the *tīrtha* called Suvarṇa,
famed in the three worlds.

19 Viṣṇu worshipped Rudra-Śiva there
in the distant past
in order to earn his grace,
and received boons even gods do not get.

20 The slayer-of-Tripura Śiva was so pleased
that he said,
"Krishna, you will be
the earth's loved one,

21 You will be the greatest
of all men on earth."
O Indra-among-rājās, by going there
and worshipping Siva,

22 One obtains Gaṇapati-hood
and an Aśvamedha's merits.
One should go next to Dhūmāvatī,
fast three nights there,

23 And obtain all the mind desires.
O ruler of men,
south of this *tīrtha*, and part of it,
is Rathavarta;

24 O dharma-learned one! One should go there
with devotion and serenity of mind,
and obtain through the grace of Mahādeva-Śiva
the ultimate perfection.

25 O bull-brave Bharata, after circumbulating it
in *pradakṣiṇa* the maha-learned should proceed
to the *tīrtha* known as Dhārā
which destroys all evils.

26 Bathing in its waters,
one is freed from all sorrows.
After doing namaskāra to the mountain,
one should proceed, O dharma-learned one,

27 To the source of the Gaṅgā,
the gate of heaven,
and with serene mind bathe
in the Koṭī-*tīrtha*.

28 One will obtain the merits
of a Puṇḍarīka sacrifice
and redeem one's family.
One night there equals a thousand-cow gift.

29 By offering oblations
to the gods and *pitṛs*
in Saptagaṅgā, Trigaṅga and Śakravarta,
one is worshipped in heaven.

30 Bathing in Kanakhala
and fasting three nights there,
one obtains the merits of an Aśvamedha
and goes to heaven.

31 Going to Kapilāvaṭa
and fasting one night there
gets one the merits of giving away
a thousand cows.

32 O Indra-among-rājās! Best of the Kurus,
one should proceed next to the *tīrtha*
of mahā-ātmaned Kapila, the rājā of the Nāgas,
famed in the three worlds.

33 Bathing in the *tīrtha* of Nāga,
O ruler of men,
one obtains the merits
of a thousand-*kapila*-cow gift.

34 Then one should go to Śāntanu's *tīrtha*
called Lalitaka;
bathing there has the power
to avert all calamities.

35 The pilgrim who bathes
where the Gaṅgā and Yamunā join
gets the merits of ten Aśvamedhas
and redeems his family.

36 One should go to Sugandha-*tīrtha*,
famed all over the world;
with purified ātman and with ill-deeds cancelled,
he is worshipped in Brahmā's realm.

37 Next is the *tīrtha* called Rudravarta.
O lord of men, O rājā,
by bathing in its waters one goes
to the heavenly realm.

38 By bathing where the Gaṅgā
and the Sarasvatī join, O finest of men,
one obtains the merits of an Aśvamedha,
and goes to heaven.

39 By worshipping the gods in the *tīrtha*
of Bhadrakarṇeśvara,
one averts all calamities,
and is worshipped in heaven.

40 Next is the *tīrtha* called Kubjāmraka;
there one obtains
the merits of a thousand-cow gift
and goes to heaven.

41 Next is the *tīrtha* Arundhatīvaṭa;
bathing in the Sāmudraka there
with the dedication
of a brahmacārī,

42 And fasting for three nights,
a man obtains the fruits
of an Aśvamedha and a thousand-cow gifts,
and redeems his race.

43 One should go like a dedicated brahmacārī
to Brahmāvarta,
obtain an Aśvamedha's merits,
and attain Soma's realm.

44 By going to Yamunāprabhava
and bathing in the Yamunā,
one obtains an Aśvamedha's merits,
and is worshipped in heaven.

45 Going to Darvīsaṁkramaṇa,
celebrated in the three worlds,
one obtains an Aśvamedha's fruits
and goes to heaven.

46 Going to Sindhuprabhava
where Siddhas and Gandharvas live,
and spending five nights there,
one gets the merits of large gold-gifts.

47 Going to the almost inaccessible *tīrtha*
of Vedī,
one gets the merits of an Aśvamedha
and attains heaven.

48 Going to Ṛṣikulyā and Vāsiṣṭha,
two famed *tīrthas*,
the three non-Brahmin castes
obtain the status of Brahmins.

49 The pilgrim who bathes in the Ṛṣikulyā
is freed of his wrong-doing;
worshipping gods and *pitṛs*,
he attains ṛṣi-hood,

50 As does the pilgrim who subsists there
for a month on herbs.
By going to Bhṛgutuṅga one obtains
an Aśvamedha's merits.

51 The pilgrim to Vīrapramokṣa
is cleansed of all misdeeds.
Then, by going
to Kṛttikā and Maghā,

52 One gets the merits of the *agniṣṭoma*
and *atirātra* yajñas.
By going to the excellent Vidyā-*tīrtha*
in the evening,

53 And bathing there, a pīlgrim obtains
all kinds of knowledge.
A night at the *tīrtha* of Mahāśrama
cancels all evils.

54 A single meal there will obtain
many holy states for the pilgrim,
and redeem ten past
and ten future generations.

55 Six days' fasting and a month's stay
in Mahālaya
brings ātman-purification,
and the merits of large gold-gifts.

56 Going to Vetasikā,
where Brahmā Pitāmaha lives,
obtains the merits of an Aśvamedha
and the realm of ācārya Uśanas-Śukra.

57 Going to Siddha-frequented Sundarikā,
according to the Purāṇas,
one is able to obtain
beauty of appearance.

58 Going to Brāhmaṇi with the total dedication
of a brahmacārī,
one attains Brahmā's realms
in a lotus-coloured chariot.

59 One should go next to holy Naimiṣa,
where the Siddhas live,
along with Brahmā
and the gods.

60 Half of all one's wrong-doings
is cancelled
simply by wishing to go there;
entering it, all of them.

61 The patient pilgrim
should spend at least
one month in Naimiṣa –
all the *tīrthas* are in Naimiṣa.

62 Living on a strict diet,
and bathing there with a serene mind,
a pilgrim obtains the merits
of many yajñas.

63 O excellent Bharata,
he sanctifies his family for seven generations,
past and future.
One who ends one's life there by fasting,

64 According to learned men,
attains the realm of the gods.
O foremost of kings, Naimiṣa is most holy,
most reverence-worthy.

65 Fasting three nights in Gaṅgodbheda,
the pilgrim obtains
the merits of a Vājapeya yajña
and becomes Brahmā-like.

66 The pilgrim who worships
the gods and *pitṛs*
in Sarasvatī-*tīrtha*
obtains the realm of Sarasvatī.

67 One should go as a brahmacārī
to Bāhudā;
a night there earns the pilgrim the merit
of being worshipped in heaven,

68 And the merits of a Devasattra yajña.
One should go
in the company of holy men
to Kṣīravatī-*tīrtha;*

69 Worshipping gods and *pitṛs* there
equals a Vājapeya yajña.
One should proceed as a brahmacārī
to Vimalāśoka,

70 And live there for a night
to become worshippable in heaven.
Next is Gopratāra,
the excellent *tīrtha* of Sarayū,

71 Where Rāma, O mahārāja,
with his servants, soldiers and animals
attained heaven after bathing in its waters
and shining with supreme effulgence.

72 Through Rāma's grace and his own efforts,
O Bharata descendant,
the pilgrim who bathes in the *tīrtha*
of Gopratāra, O ruler of men,

73 Has his body purified, his wrongs cancelled,
and he is worshipped in heaven.
Bathing in the Rāma-*tīrtha* of the Gomatī,
O Kaurava descendant,

74 A pilgrim obtains the merits of an Aśvamedha
and redeems his family.
O bull-brave Bharata,
the *tīrtha* called Śatasāhasraka –

75 Bathing there with a serene mind,
a pilgrim obtains
the merits of the gift
of a thousand cows.

76 From there one should proceed
to Bhartsthāna;
going there obtains the merits
of an Aśvamedha yajña.

77 Bathing in the Koṭī-*tīrtha*
and worshipping Kārtikeya,
one gets the merits of a thousand-cow gift,
and shines.

78 Going to Vārāṇasī,
worshipping bull-bannered Vṛṣadhvaja-Śiva
and bathing in Kapila obtains the merits
of a Rājasūya.

79 O perpetuator of the Kurus!
Going to Avimukta,
a darshan of god-of-gods Śiva
absolves a pilgrim
even of the sin
of killing a Brahmin.

80 The man who dies there achieves mokṣa.
Proceeding
to the remote *tīrtha*
dedicated to Mārkaṇḍeya,

81 At the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Goṃatī,
one obtains the merits
of an *agniṣṭoma*,
and redeems one's family.

82 Going as a dedicated brahmacārī to Gayā,
one obtains
the merits of an Aśvamedha yajña
and saves one's race.

83 Whatever is reverentially offered
at the three-worlds-famous *tīrtha*
called Akṣayavaṭa
is said to become inexhaustible.

84 Offering worship to the gods and *pitṛs*
in Mahānadī,
one obtains the undecaying realm,
and redeems one's family.

85 Going to Brahmasara decorated
with the woods of Dharma,
one reaches the realm of Brahmā
as soon as night passes.

86 A sacrificial pillar was built
near that lake by Brahmā;
circumambulation of it obtains
a Vājapeya's merits.

87 One should go next to world-renowned Dhenuka;
staying there one night,
and offering gifts of sesame-seeds
in cow-design,

88 Ātman purified and wrongs erased,
a pilgrim reaches the realm of Soma.
Even to this day
there are vivid hoof marks

89 On that mountain made by *kapila* cows.
O Bharata-descendant,
one can see them clearly even today;
it is said

90 That if one bathes in pools created
from those hoof-pressures, O Indra-among-rājās,
O finest of kings, O Bharata descendant, whatever
wrong-doing one is guilty of is instantly erased.

91 One should go to Gṛdhravaṭa,
dedicated to the bull-bannered god Śiva.
One whould smear one's body
with ash.

92 If a Brahmin, the pilgrim will obtain
the merits of twelve-year vows;
if of other caste,
all ill-deeds will be cancelled.

93 O bull-brave Bharata! One should proceed
to Udayagiri filled with melodious birdsong.
Sāvitrī's footprints
can still be seen there.

94 The strict-vowed Brahmin
who recites his *saṁdhyā* meditation once
obtains the merits
of a twelve-year *saṁdhyā*.

95 A pilgrim is freed from re-birth,
O bull brave Bharata,
if he goes to the *tīrtha*
known as Yonidvāra.

96 O rājā! The pilgrim who stays in Gayā
for the bright and dark fortnights
redeems seven generations of his family,
past and future.

97 One should hope for many sons –
one at least will go to Gayā,
or perform an Aśvamedha,
or sacrifice a Nila bull.

98 The pilgrim should go to Phalgu,
where he will obtain
the merits of an Aśvamedha,
and succeed in every way.

99 Then to Dharmaprastha
with a serene mind.
O Indra-among-kings! Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira!
It is said Dharma is always present there.

100 Drinking well-water there,
purifying one's body by bathing,
worshipping gods and *pitṛs*,
one goes, cleansed of ill-deeds, to heaven.

101 Entering the āśrama
of the self-disciplined mahā-ṛṣi Mataṅga,
which is capable of removing
all griefs and sorrows,

102 A pilgrim obtains the merits
of a Gavāmayana yajña.
Touching the image of Dharma there equals
an Aśvamedha yajña.

103 O Indra-among-rājās! One should go next
to the region of Brahmā;
foremost of men,
if a man enters that *tīrtha*,

104 He obtains the merits of a Rājasūya
and an Aśvamedha.
Next the pilgrim should proceed
to Rājagṛha;

105 Bathing there brings the divine joy
of the ṛṣi Kakṣīvān.
The pure-hearted man should offer worship
there to Yakṣiṇī-devī,

106 Whose favour erases even the crime
of killing a Brahmin.
Going to Maṇināga equals the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

107 The pilgrim who eats anything grown
in that *tīrtha*
acquires immunity against the deadliest
of snake-bites;

108 Staying there for a night cleanses
all one's wrong-doing.
One should go to the lovely forest
of the ṛṣi Gautama;

109 Bathing in the Ahalyā lake,
one attains perfection;
this *tīrtha* of Lakṣmī brings
incalculable prosperity.

110 Bathing in the three-worlds-renowned
sacred well there,
the pilgrim is sure to obtain the fruits
of a Vājapeya yajña.

111 By bathing in another well
sacred to the royal ṛṣi Janaka
and frequented by the gods,
one enters Viṣṇu's realm.

112 The *tīrtha* of Vināśana has the power
to remove all wrong-doing;
it equals a Vājapeya
and gives Soma's realm.

113 By going to Gaṇḍakī, a *tīrtha* produced
by all the *tīrthas'* waters,
one obtains a Vājapeya's merits
and enters the realm of Sūrya.

114 Going to the three-worlds-famous
river Viśalyā,
one obtains a *agniṣṭoma*'s merits
and enters the realm of Sūrya.

115 By going to Adhivaṅga where famed ascetics stay,
O wise-in-dharma mahārāja,
one rejoices in the realm
of the Guhyakas.

116 One should go to the river Kampanā
where Siddhas stay,
and obtain the merits of a Puṇḍarīka
and find heaven.

117 O ruler of the earth,
going to the river Maheśvarī,
one obtains the merits of an Aśvamedha
and redeems his race.

118 A pilgrim to the Pool-of-the-Gods Deva Puṣkariṇī
is protected against all calamities,
and obtains the merits
of an Aśvamedha.

119 One should go with the serene mind of a brahmacārī
to Somapada:
bathing in its Maheśvara
equals an Aśvamedha.

120 O bull brave Bharata! It is said
that in that *tīrtha* alone are one crore *tīrthas.*
Once an evil-bent anti-god,
disguised as a tortoise,

121 Tried to steal the *tīrtha,*
but was foiled by Viṣṇu.
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
by bathing in that *tīrtha,*

122 One obtains the merits of a Puṇḍarīka
and attains the realm of Viṣṇu.
Next one should go
to the Nārāyaṇa *tīrtha*,

123 Which, O Indra-among-rājās,
is Viṣṇu's permanent habitation.
Brahmā and the other gods,
the tapasyā-rich ṛṣis,

124 The Ādityas, Vasus, and Rudras
there worship Janārdana.
Viṣṇu of heroic exploits
there became famous as Śālagrama;

125 Pilgrimage to the lord of the three worlds,
boon-bestowing Viṣṇu, undecaying Viṣṇu,
equals an Aśvamedha
and gives Viṣṇu's realm.

126 O dharma-learned one!
A well there is said to have the power
to cancel all one's wrong-doing;
in that well are the four seas' waters;

127 Bathing in it provides protection
from all calamities.
Going to the boon-bestowing god,
undecaying Mahādeva-Rudra-Śiva,

128 Where he always dwells,
one becomes like the moon
emerging from behind clouds;
bathing in Jātismara with a serene mind,

129 One obtains the ability to recollect
one's past life.
Going to the *tīrtha* of Maheśvarapura,
and worshipping bull-bannered Vṛṣadhvaja-Śiva.

130 And fasting there,
one gets all one's desires fulfilled.
One should go next
to all-wrong-destroying Vāmana,

131 And approach the divinty Hari
and so avert all disasters.
Next is the Kuśika āśrama
which destroys all evils.

132 Bathing in its mahā-evil-erasing waters,
the pilgrim
obtains the merits
of a great Rājasūya yajña.

133 One should go to the *tīrtha*
of Campakāraṇya;
a night spent there equals the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

134 Going to Jyeṣṭhila-*tīrtha*
and living for a night there
equals the merits that accrue
from a thousand-cow gift.

135 Seeing the lord of the universe Viśveśvara-Śiva
with his mahā-radiant devī Pārvatī,
O bull-brave hero, the pilgrim attains the realms
of Mitra and Varuṇa.

136 Fasting for three nights there
obtains the merits of an *agniṣṭoma.*
Going to Kanyāsaṁvedya
with a serene mind,

137 One achieves Manu, lord of created life.
O Bhārata descendant,
whatever is distributed in charity
at this *tīrtha,*

138 Becomes, according to learned ṛṣis,
never-fading.
Going to the *tīrtha* of Niścīra,
celebrated in the three worlds,

139 One obtains the merits of an Aśvamedha,
and attains Viṣṇu's realm.
Charity distributed
at the confluence of Niścīra,

140 Transports the giver immediately
to the realm of Brahmā.
O tiger-among-men, in Niścīra
is the world-renowned āśrama of Vasiṣṭha.

141 The pilgrim to Devakūṭa,
where Brahmā-ṛṣis live,
obtains the merits of an Aśvamedha
and redeems his race.

142 O Indra-among-rājās! One should go next
to the lake of ṛṣi Kauśika,
where in the past Kuśika's son Viśvāmitra
attained perfection.

143 Bathing there obtains the merits
of a Vājapeya yajña.
O bull-brave Bharata! The pilgrim who spends
a month in Kauśika-*tīrtha*

144 Obtains during that month the merits
of an Aśvamedha.
The pilgrim who bathes
in the great Mahāhlada

145 Never has any calamity fall on him,
and obtains the merits
of large gold-gifts.
Seeing Kumāra-Kārtikeya in Vīrāśrama,

146 A man obtains the merits
of an Aśvamedha yajna.
Going to Agnidhārā,
celebrated in the three worlds,

147 And bathing there, obtains the merits
of an *agniṣṭoma.*
Going to the boon-bestowing god,
the undecaying Viṣṇu,

148 And to the pool dedicated to Brahmā
near the king of mountains,
and bathing there, one obtains the merits
of an *agniṣṭoma.*

149 Emerging from the Pool of Brahmā,
into which falls
the sanctifying stream Kumāradhārā,
famed in the three worlds,

150 After bathing there, one knows
that all one's desires will be fulfilled.
Six days' fasting there absolves the pilgrim
even of Brahmin-murder.

151 The pilgrim should then go
to the *tīrtha* of Gaurī,
who lives on a mountain
celebrated in the three worlds.

152 Climbing the peak,
one should go to Stanakunda,
and bathing there obtain the fruits
of a Vājapeya yajña.

153 Bathing there and worshipping
the gods and *pitṛs,*
one obtains an Aśvamedha's merits
and goes to Śakra-Indra's realm.

154 Going to the pool of Tāmrāruṇa,
a brahmacārī obtains the merits
of an Aśvamedha yajña
and achieves Brahmā's realm.

155 Going to Nandinī-*tīrtha*,
where gods dwell,
and bathing in the well there,
one obtains the merits
of a Naramedha
or Human Sacrifice.

156 Bathing at the confluence
of the Kauśikī and Aruṇā,
and Kālikā and Aruṇā,
and fasting there for three nights,
one obtains the favour
of having all demerits erased.

157 Going to the *tīrtha*
of Urvaśī and Somāśrama
and bathing at Kumbhakarṇāśrama
makes one worshipped on earth.

158 Bathing in the Kokāmuka
with the serene mind of a brahmacārī
brings, say the ancients,
memories of past lives.

159 Going to the Prāñnadī,
a twice-born attains all his desires
and with purified ātman enters
the realm of Śakra-Indra.

160 Going to the island of Ṛṣabha
and Krauñcanisūdana-*tīrtha,*
and bathing in the Sarasvatī,
one shines in heaven.

161 Mahārāja! Bathing in the *tīrtha*
called Auddālaka, where ṛṣis live,
the pilgrim is cleansed
of all wrong-doings.

162 Going to the *tīrtha* of Dharma,
where ṛṣis of Brahmā live,
one obtains the merits of a Vājapeya
and is worshipped in a sky-chariot.

163 Bathing in the Campā in the Bhāgirathī,
and going to Dundarpana
one obtains the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

164 A pilgrim to the sacred *tīrtha* of Lalitakā,
where holy men stay,
obtains a Rājasūya,
and is worshipped in heaven.

SECTION EIGHTY-FIVE

1 Going in the evening *saṁdhyā*
to the excellent Saṁvedya,
and bathing there,
the pilgrim acquires great learning.

2 O rājā! Going to Lauhitya,
created by the greatness of Rāma,
one obtains the merits
of large god-gifts.

3 The pilgrim who fasts in Karatoyā
for three nights,
obtains, by Prajāpati's dispensation,
an Aśvamedha's merits.

4 O Indra-among-rājā! Wise men have said
the pilgrim who goes to the *saṁgama*-confluence
of the Gaṅgā with the sea,
gets ten Aśvamedha's merits.

5 O rājā! Going to the opposite bank of the Gaṅgā
and spending three nights there,
cleanses a pilgrim
of all wrong-doings.

6 One should proceed next to Vaitaraṇī,
which removes all evils.
Reaching its Virāja-*tīrtha,*
one shines like the moon.

7 He sanctifies his family,
and is himself absolved,
and obtains the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

8 Living with restrained senses at the confluence
of Śoṇa and Jyoti,
and worshipping gods and *pitṛs*,
obtains an *agniṣṭoma's* merits.

9 Bathing in the Vaṁśagulma,
which is the source of the Śoṇa and Narmadā,
one obtains the merits
of an Aśvamedha.

10 Going to the Ṛṣabha-*tīrtha* in Kosala
and fasting there three nights,
one obtains the merits
of a Vājapeya;

11 He obtains the merits of a thousand-cow gift
and redeems his race.
Going to Kosala
and bathing in Kāla-*tīrtha*,

12 One obtains the merits
of giving away eleven bulls.
Bathing in Puṣpavatī and fasting there
for three nights, the pilgrim

13 Obtains the fruits of a thousand-cow gift
and redeems his family.
O bull brave Bharata! Going to the *tīrtha*
called Badarikā,

14 One gets long life; bathing there,
one reaches heaven.
From there the pilgrim should go
to the Bhāgirathī,

15 And on to Campā
and the *tīrtha* called Daṇḍa
to obtain the merits
of a thousand-cow gift;
from there to Lapetika,
where holy men live,

16 To obtain the merits of a Vājapeya
and be worshipped in heaven.
Then to Mahendra,
where Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma visits;

17 Bathing in its Rāma-*tīrtha* brings
an Aśvamedha's merits.
O noble Kuru, there is also Mataṅga's *tīrtha*
called Kedara.

18 To bathe there, O excelling Kuru,
is equal to giving away a thousand cows.
At the Śrī mountain,
one should bathe in the river.

19 By worshipping bull-bannered Vṛṣadhvaja-Śiva,
one obtains an Aśvamedha's merits;
radiant Mahādeva-Śiva dwells with his consort
on Śrī mountain.

20 On Śrī dwell Brahmā
and the gods also.
Bathing in the Devahṛda
with a perfectly serene mind,

21 One obtains an Aśvamedha's merits
and attains perfection.
On god-worshipped Ṛṣabha-hill in Paṇḍya
on obtains a Vājapeya.

22 One should go next
to apsarā-circled Kāveri;
bathing there one obtains the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

23 O Indra-among-rājās!
Next is the Kanyā *tīrtha* on the sea-coast;
to bathe there is to have
all one's wrong- doing cancelled.

24 Next is three-worlds-celebrated Gokarṇa
situated
in the middle of the ocean,
and worshipped by all,

25 Including Brahmā and the gods,
tapasyā-rich ṛṣis, *bhūtas,*
Yakṣas, Kinnaras and Piśācas,
as well as

26 Siddhas, Cāraṇas, Gandharvas,
humans, Nāgas,
Rivers and Seas and Hills –
all worshipping the lord of Umā.

27 Fasting three nights there
and offering worship to Īśāna-Śiva,
obtains the merits of an Aśvamedha-
and Gaṇapati-status as well.

28 Staying there twelve nights there
purifies a pilgrim's ātman.
One should go next
to the three-worlds-famed Gāyatrī;

29 Staying there three nights one obtains
the merits of a thousand-cow gift.
An incredible event
takes place there, O lord of men!

30 If a Brahmin (born of a woman
of any other caste)
recities the Gāyatrī mantra
in that *tīrtha,*
his recitation loses rich melody
and enchanting rhythm;

31 And should a non-Brahmin
try to recite the Sāvitrī-Gāyatrī mantra,
the words get muddled.
Next is the Saṁvarta-*tīrtha,*

32 Where one obtains beauty of appearance
and enormous prosperity.
Then the Veṇā; offering worship
to gods and *pitṛs* there,

33 A man obtains a chariot
pulled by cranes and peacocks,
Next is the Godāvarī,
where Siddhas always live.

34 One obtains the merits of a cow-yajña
by going to Vāsukī's *tīrtha.*
Bathing in the Veṇā
gets a Vājapeya.

35 Bathing in the Varadā one obtains
the merits of a thousand-cow gift;
living for three nights
in Brahmasthāna,

36 One gets the merits of a thousand-cow gift
and attains heaven.
Going to Kuśaplavana
with a serene mind,

37 Fasting three nights and bathing there,
one obtains the merits
of an Aśvamedha;
bathing in Kṛṣṇavena-fed Deva,

38 Known as Jātismara,
one obtains recall of one's past lives.
Here the lord of the gods
performed a hundred yajñas

39 And achieved heaven;
going there obtains an *agniṣṭoma.*
Bathing in the Sarvadeva
one obtains a thousand-cow gift.

40 Going to the Payoṣṇī Lake
and worshipping the gods and *pitṛs*
one obtains the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

41 Immediately on bathing
in the Daṇḍakāraṇya
a pilgrim obtains the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

42 Going to the āśrama of Sarabhaṅga
of mahātmā Śukra,
a man overcomes all disabilities,
and redeems his family.

43 Next he should go to Śūrpāraka
where Jāmadāgnya-Paraśurāma lives.
Bathing there brings the merits
of large gold-gifts.

44 Bathing in the Sapta-Godāvarī-*tīrtha*
with a serene mind,
one amasses merits
and goes to the world of the gods.

45 Going to the Devapatha-*tīrtha*
with a serene mind,
one obtains the merits that accrue
from a Deva-satra ritual.

46 Next to Taṅgakārṇaya
with the serene mind of a brahmacārī –
here ṛṣi Sārasvat taught the Vedas
to other ṛṣis;

47 And when the Vedas were lost,
the muni Aṅgiras's son
seated himself comfortably
on the ṛṣis' upper garments,

48 And clearly and firmly pronounced
the syllable Auṁ,
and the ṛṣis instantly recalled
all they had memorised.

49 There the ṛṣis, the gods,
Varuṇa, Agni, Prajāpati,
Hari and Nārāyaṇa,
and Mahādeva-Śiva,

50 Together with the mahā-radiant deity
Brahmā Pitamāha,
appointed the mahā-radiant Bhṛgu
to perform their yajña.

51 Bhṛgu made the ordained offerings
of ghee,
and performed the yajña
for the shining assemblage of gods;

52 And after the fire-god
had been propitiated
in the ritual manner,
the gods returned to their realms

53 The pilgrim who enters the *tīrtha* of Tuṅgaka,
whether man or woman,
is immediately cleansed
of all wrong-doings.

54 One should spend at least a month
in that *tīrtha;*
one will then reach Brahmā's realm
and redeem one's family.

55 Offering worship to gods and *pitṛs*
in Medhavika-*tīrtha,*
one obtains memory and intelligence,
and an *agniṣṭoma's* merits.

56 Bathing in the famous lake
in the Kālañjara mountain,
the pilgrim obtains the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

57 The pilgrim who bathes there
and offers worship
to the gods and *pitṛs*
is worshipped in the heavenly world.

58 Going to the all-ill-deeds-destroying river
Mandākinī
which flows from the excellent mountain
named Citrakūṭa,

59 And bathing there and worshipping
the gods and *pitṛs*,
one obtains the merits of an Aśvamedha
and attains perfection.

60 O dharma-knowing ruler,
one should go to Bhartṛsthāna
where the general of the gods
Mahāsena-Guha-Kārtikeya lives;

61 Just the act of going there brings fulfilment.
Bathing in the Koṭī-*tīrtha*
brings the merits
of a thousand-cow gift.

62 After circumambulating it in *pradakṣiṇa,*
the pilgrim should proceed to Jyeṣṭhasthāna,
and shine like the moon,
seeing Mahādeva-Śiva there.

63 Mahārāja, O bull-brave Bharata,
Yudhiṣṭhira,
there one sees the famous pool
where the waters of four seas mix.

64 Bathing in it and worshipping
the gods and *pitṛs*
with a serene mind, the purified pilgrim
attains perfection.

65 One should then go to Mahā-Śṛṅgaverapura,
O Indra-among-rājās,
where, O mahārāja, Daśaratha's son Rāma
crossed the Gaṅgā.

66 O mahā-muscled one! Bathing in that *tīrtha*
one is cleansed of all wrong-doing.
Bathing in the Gāṅga with a serene mind,
a brahmacārī

67 Pilgrim obtains the fruits
of a Vājapeya-yajña.
Next is the Muñjavaṭa-*tīrtha*
sacred to Śiva;

68 Seeing Mahādeva-Śiva there, worshipping him,
and circumambulating in *pradakṣiṇa*
the *tīrtha*, one obtains the merits
of the Gaṇapati state.

69 Bathing in the Jāhnavī-Gaṅgā cleanses
all one's wrong-doings.
Next is Prayāga, highly commended
by all ṛṣis,

70 Where dwell Brahmā, the gods,
the quarters and their presiding deities,
the World-Guardians Lokapālas,
Sādhyas, venerated *pitṛs*,

71 Supreme ṛṣis – Sanatkumāra,
and many others –
the without-blemish ṛṣis of Brahmā –
Aṅgiras and others –

72 The Nāgas, Suparṇas,
Siddhas, Sūrya,
the Rivers, the Seas,
the Gandharvas and the Apsarās,

73 And Bhagavān Hari-Viṣṇu himself
with Prajāpati leading.
There are three tunnels of fire
through which the Jāhnavī-Gaṅgā,

74 Greatest of *tīrthas*, rushes rapidly forward.
The daughter of Tapana,
the devī celebrated
in all the three worlds,

75 World-purifying Yamunā,
here joins with the Gaṅgā;
the land between the Gaṅgā
and the Yamunā
is known as the *jaghana*,
the womb of the earth.

76 Prayāga is the most sacred place
in that region.
Prayāga, Kumbala,
and the spot called Aśvatara,

77 Together with the Bhogavatī-*tīrtha*
are the sacrificial altars of Prajāpati.
Yudhiṣṭhira, the Vedas,
the embodied Yajñas

78 And tapasyā-rich ṛṣis here
worship Brahmā.
Here the gods and rulers of kingdoms
perform yajñas.

79 That is why, O Bharata-descendant,
Prāyaga may be considered
as the most sacred of *tīrthas*.
in the three worlds.

80 One loses the fear of death
if one goes to this *tīrtha*,
chants its name,
and is cleansed of all ill-deeds.

81 The pilgrim who bathes in this
most sacred of *saṁgama*-confluences
obtains the merits of a Rājasūya
and an Aśvamedha.

82 O Bhārata descendant, the gods themselves
worship at this sacrificial altar.
A little given in charity here
multiplies a thousandfold.

83 *Tāta*, child, let neither Vedic text
nor mortal opinion
dissuade you from the desire of dying
in Prayāga.

84 Wise men say that six crore
and ten thousand *tīrthas*
can be found in Prayāga alone,
O Kaurava-descendant.

85 Bathing where the Gaṅgā and Yamunā meet,
one obtains the merits
of fourfold knowledge
and of truth-speaking.

86 There is an excellent *tīrtha*
of Vāsuki's called Bhogavatī;
bathing in it earns
an Aśvamedha's merits.

87 In the Gaṅgā
is a three-worlds-celebrated *tīrtha*
called Haṁsaprapatna,
which gives the merits of ten yajñas.

88 Bathing anywhere in the Gaṅgā gives
the merits of a pilgrimage to Kurukṣetra;
Kanakhala is very sacred,
but most sacred is Prayāga.

89 One hundred crimes are burnt away
by the waters
as fuel is burnt by fire,
when a pilgrim bathes in the Gaṅgā.

90 In the Satya-yuga all *tīrtha* were all-holy;
in the Tretā, Puṣkara;
in Dvāpara, Kurukṣetra;
in Kali-yuga, Gaṅgā.

91 In Puṣkara, perform tapasyā;
in Mahālaya, give alms;
in the Malaya hills,
climb the funeral pyre;
and in Bhṛgutuṅga,
abandon life by fasting.

92 Bathing in Puṣkara, Kurukṣetra,
Gaṅgā and her Womb,
one saves one's race for seven generations,
past and future.

93 To chant the name of Gaṅgā
is to be purified.
To see her is to prosper;
to bathe in her and drink her water
is to redeem seven generations,
past and future.

94 O rājā! For as long as a man's bones
touch the waters of the Gaṅgā,
he will be worshipped
in heaven –

95 Like the man who earns merits
by visiting *tīrthas*
in a spirit of reverence
and gets the immortal realms.

96 There is no *tīrtha* like the Gaṅgā,
no god like Keśava-Krishna,
no mortal superior to a Brahman-knower –
these are Pitāmaha-Brahmā's words.

97 Where the Gaṅgā's banks are, mahārāja,
are woods suited for tapasyā.
Wherever the Gaṅgā flows,
there are āśramas.

98 This truth should be recited only
to Brahman-knowers, sādhus,
men, one's own sons, friends,
disciples and dependants,

99 For it is without equal, it is blessed,
it is sacred,
it leads to heaven, it entertains,
sanctifies, it is full of dharma.

100 It is the secret of the maharṣis,
the cleanser of wrongs.
Reciting this holy text to Brahman-knowers,
one attains heaven.

101 It is auspicious, heaven-providing,
holy, foe-destroying;
it is the best of narratives,
it increases one's intelligence.

102 With it the sonless get sons,
the poor get wealth,
the rājā conquers the world,
Vaiśyas prosper,

103 The Śūdra gets his desires,
the Brahmin crosses all knowledge.
The man who daily
listens to it,

104 Is able to recall his past lives,
and enjoys heaven.
Some of these *tīrthas* are accessible,
others hard to reach,

105 But the pilgrim eager to see them
should visit them even in imagination.
The Vasus, Sādhyas,
Ādityas, Maruts, Aśvins,

106 And god-like ṛṣis all bathed in them
by doing good deeds.
O descendant of Kuru, strict-vowed hero,
do the same.

107 Increase your goodness
and with a serene mind visit these *tīrthas*.
Honest men and those who know the śāstras
can visit

108 All these *tīrthas* with their pure ātman,
their faith in divinity,
and their knowledge of the Vedas.
The man

109 Indisciplined, impure, not observing vows,
the thief, the mean-motived
cannot bathe in these *tīrthas.*
You know dharma and artha,

110 Your goodness has pleased your father,
your grandfather,
your great-grandfather,
the gods and Brahmā-Pitāmaha, –

111 And the ṛṣis. O Vāsava-Indra-like hero, O Bhīṣma,
you who know dharma,
you will attain the realm of the Vasus,
and obtain eternal fame on earth.

112 Nārada said: "With these words
the *bhagavan* ṛṣi Pulastya
cheerfully bid Bhīṣma farewell,
and disappeared.

113 O tiger-among-the-Kauravas Yudhiṣṭhira!
Bhīṣma, who knew the deepest meanings
of the śāstras, travelled the world over
at Pulastya's command,

114 And, O mahā-fortune-favoured one,
he ended his pilgrimage at Prāyaga,
the climax of his mahā-merit-earning visits
to the defect removing *tīrthas.*

115 The man who covers the world
in such a pilgrimage,
obtains the fruits of a hundred Aśvamedhas
and attains mokṣa.

116 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
you will obtain eight times the dharma-merit
that the finest of Kurus, Bhīṣma,
was able to obtain.

117 Since you will take all these ṛṣis
to the *tīrthas*,
your merits will be eight times greater.
O Bharata descendant!
The *tīrthas* are targeted by rākṣasas;
none but you can hope to visit them.

118 The man who rises early in the morning
and recities this narrative
of the *tīrthas* by deva-ṛṣi Pulastya
is cleansed of his wrongs.

119 These most excellent ṛṣis –
Vālmīki and Kaśyapa,
Ātreya, Kuṇḍajahara, Viśvāmitra
and Gautama,

120 Asita, Devala, Mārkaṇḍeya,
and Gālava,
Bharadvāja, Vasiṣṭha,
and the *muni* Uddālaka,

121 Śaunaka, excellent-in-tapasyā Vyāsa
and his son,
foremost of *munis* Durvāsas,
and great Jābāli –

122 All these mighty ṛṣis
are waiting for you.
Go on your *tīrthas*, mahārāja,
and meet them.

123 Mahārāja, a radiant mahā-ṛṣi
named Lomaśa
will come to see you.
Go with him on your pilgrimage.

124 You who are wise in dharma, you will go with me
to some of these *tīrthas*,
and obtain great fame,
as rājā Mahābhiṣa did,

125 As did dharmātmā Yayāti,
and rājā Pururavas.
O tiger-among-rājās,
you will be radiant in your dharma,

126 As rājā Bhāgīratha was,
as was famed Rāma.
You will shine like the sun
among all rājās.

127 Like Manu, Ikṣvāku,
mahā-famous Puru, and Veṇa,
mahārāja, you will become celebrated
everywhere.

128 As in the past,
Vṛtra-slaying Indra, king of gods,
burnt his enemies,
and unchallenged ruled the three worlds,

129 You will destroy your enemies,
and rule undisturbed.
O lotus-eyed hero,
after conquering the earth

130 As a Kṣatriya ruler should,
you will obtain great fame
by your dharma,
as Kārtavīrya-Arjuna did."

131 O mahārāja Janamejaya! In this way
(Vaiśampāyana continued) Nārada comforted
and encouraged rājā Yudhiṣṭhira and,
bidding him farewell, departed.

132 Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira thought over his words,
and discussed with the ṛṣis
the merits obtained
from visiting the *tīrthas.*

SECTION EIGHTY-SIX

1 After consulting his brothers and wise Nārada,
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira said
to grandfatherly Dhaumya:

2 "I have sent that invincibly powerful,
tiger-among-men,
mahā-muscled intelligent Jiṣṇu-Arjuna
to gather weapons.

3 Arjuna has faith in me,
he is supremely-skilled, rich in tapasyā,
he is efficient, he is like
Prabhu Lord Vāsudeva-Krishna himself.

4 I know both Krishna and Arjuna well;
I know
these great foe-destroyers
as well as Vyāsa does.

5 Lotus-eyed Krishna and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
have been together for three yugas;
Nārada knows this,
for he told me.

6 They are the eternal ṛṣis
Nara and Nārāyaṇa.
Because I had faith in Arjuna,
I sent him to get the weapons.

7 Arjuna is no less than Śakra-Indra,
certainly as competent;
I sent a god's son Arjuna
to the king of the gods.

8 Bhīṣma and Droṇa are great chariot-warriors;
Droṇa's son is invincible –
Duryodhana has these mahā-chariot-heroes
commanding his army.

9 They all know the Vedas,
are skilled in weapons-lore, they are brave;
they are eager to fight Arjuna the mahā-chariot-hero
who is expert in divine weapons;

10 Karṇa has the wind-god's speed;
he is like fire,
his arrows tongues of flame;
the battlefield's dust is the smoke;
his leather-cased left hand's slaps
are the fire's crackle;

11 Encouraged by Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son,
like fire by wind,
Karṇa, like the doomsday fire at yuga-end,
sent by all-destroying Kāla,
will consume my soldiers
like straw.

12 Only that mahā cloud-mass
of Arjuna and Krishna combined,
Arjuna's Gāṇḍīva being the rainbow,
his horses white cranes

13 Below it, his weapons the fierce bolts of lightning,
can hope to extinguish
the flames of Karṇa
with steadily-shot arrows.

14 Foe-conquering hero dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna cannot fail
to get all the divine weapons and powers
from enemy-city-destroying Śakra-Indra.

15 Singly he equals them all;
how is it possible otherwise
to defeat those brilliantly formidable
and proficient enemies?

16 We will soon see
the foe-destroying Pāṇḍava-Arjuna return
with the divine weapons,
for Arjuna never falters on a mission.

17 And until he returns,
the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
will never have peace of mind
in the Kāmyaka-forest.

18 Let us therefore turn our thoughts
to other sacred and pleasing
fruit-and-vegetable-filled,
holy-men-frequented forests,

19 Where we can with ease
pass our days
waiting for the invincible hero Arjuna,
like farmers waiting for rain.

20 Tell us all about the various
lovely āśramas, lakes,
rivers, and mountains
visited by the twice-born.

21 O Brahmin, in Arjuna's absence,
I have no desire
to continue staying in Kāmyaka.
Let us go elsewhere."

SECTION EIGHTY-SEVEN

1 When Dhaumya
who was like Bṛhaspati himself
saw the Pāṇḍavas in low spirits
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
he comforted them with gentle words,
saying to Yudhiṣṭhira:

2 O bull-brave Bharata, faultless one,
let me name
some of the sacred āśramas and *tīrthas*
recommended by Brahmins.

3 O rājā lord of men,
after you listen to this,
your, your brothers' and Draupadī's griefs
will be removed.

4 Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
just listening to their recitation
brings great merit; going there, O finest of men,
a hundred times more.

5 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
first let me tell you of the eastern region
where, as far as I recall,
the rājā-ṛṣis go.

6 O descendant of Bharata,
the *tīrtha* there visited by divine ṛṣis
is called Naimiṣa; separate *tīrthas* there
are dedicated to the gods.

7 There flows the lovely, holy Gomatī;
there is the sacrificial altar of the gods,
the yajña-bhūmi,
the sacred ground of the Sun, Vivasvata.

8 There is the greatest of hills, holy Gaya,
adored by rāja-ṛṣis;
there is the holy
god-visited lake of Brahmā.

9 O tiger-among-men! That is the reason
for ancient sages advising
that a man should desire many sons –
one, at least, visiting Gaya,

10 Could perform the Aśvamedha
and donate a *nīla*-bull,
and so redeem ten generations of his race,
past and future.

11 There is the Mahānadī river
and the Gayaśīrṣa *tīrtha*;
there the banyan described by Brahmins
as undecaying.

12 *Prabhu!* Lord Yudhiṣṭhira! Food offered
to the *pitṛs* there becomes inexhaustible.
There is the great river of sacred waters,
Phalgu.

13 There is the Kauśikī river
abundant in roots and fruits, O bull-brave Bharata,
where the great acetic Viśvāmitra
attained Brāhmin-hood.

14 There is the sacred Gaṅgā,
where Bhagīratha performed
many huge yajñas
and gave away enormous *dakṣiṇā.*

15 They say in Pañcāla is a forest
called Utpalā,
where Kuśika's descendant Viśvāmitra and his son
performed many yajñas,

16 And where, seeing proofs of Viśvāmitra's
superhuman powers,
Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma
sang praises of his ancestors.

17 In Kanyākubja, Kuśika's descendant Viśvāmitra
drank soma with Indra,
gave up Kṣatriy-ahood-saying,
"I am a Brahmin."

18 There is the world-famous confluence
of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā;
it destroys all defects;
holy ṛṣis adore it.

19 O excellent Bharata! Pitāmaha-Brahmā,
who is the Ātman of all,
in this place performed his yajñas;
that is the reason
it is known as Prayāga,
or "the Place of Yajña."

20 O Indra-among-rājās! There is the holiest āśrama,
that of Agastya,
and also the Tāpasa-forest
made radiant by men of tapasyā.

21 There is the Hiraṇyabindu mahā-*tīrtha*
on the Kālañjara mountain;
there the lovely,
most auspicious Agastya hill.

22 O Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira! There is the mountain
Mahendra, sacred to mahā-ātmaned Bhārgava,
O Kaurava descendant, where in the distant past
Pitāmaha-Brahmā performed his yajñas.

23 Where the Bhāgīrathī enters a lake,
is another sacred river known,
O lord-of-the-earth Yudhiṣṭhira,
as Brahmaśālā,

24 Whose darshan produces
the greatest of holy merit;
on its banks is the famous,
excellent, auspicious

25 Mahā-āśrama of the mahātmā ṛṣi Mataṅga,
called Kedāra.
There is the lovely Kuṇḍoda hill,
with fruits, roots, and water,

26 Where the Niṣadha king Nala
slaked his thirst and briefly rested.
There also is Devavana,
visited by ascetics.

27 Here are the rivers Bahudā and Nandā
flowing from high hill-tops.
I have given you the names
of all the lakes, *tīrthas*,

28 Rivers, hills and other sacred spots
in the eastern region.
Now let me tell you
about the *tīrthas*, rivers,
mountains, and other holy spots
of the three other quarters.

SECTION EIGHTY-EIGHT

1 O descendant of Bharata (Dhaumya said),
let me give you
a detailed account of the *tīrthas*
in the south.

2 There is the merit-giving Godāvarī,
a river of copious waters;
on its banks are places
where ascetics gather.

3 The rivers Veṇā and Bhīmarathī
are also here –
both fault-removing, fear-banishing *tīrthas*,
with birds, deer, and ascetics.

4 O bull-brave Bharata, here is the *tīrtha*
of the royal sage Nṛga –
and the lovely Payoṣṇī river,
copious-watered, Brāhmin-visited.

[III:88:5-14]

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5 This is the place where the mahā-illustrious
mahāyogī Mārkaṇḍeya
sang the glories of king Nṛga
and his dynasty.

6 We have heard
of the yajña-performing king Nṛga,
and what happened when he performed
a yajña in the *tīrtha*

7 Called Varāha on the Payoṣṇī:
the soma went to Indra's head,
the *dakṣiṇā* to the heads of the Brahmins.
The Payoṣṇī's waters,
in vessel, or flowing, or wind-flung,
cleanse all a man's ill-deeds.

8 If one goes to that higher-than-heaven *tīrtha*
created by trident-wielding Śiva
and worships Śiva,
one enters Śiva's realm.

9 Put the Gaṅgā and all other holy rivers
at one end,
and the Payoṣṇī on the other –
believe me, the Payoṣṇī is superior.

10 O bull-brave Bharata!
On the Varuṇasrotasa mountain
is the auspicious forest of Māthara
with fruits and edible roots and a yajña-pole.

11 North of it and near the sacred āśrama
of Kaṇva
are innumerable woods and groves
where men of tapasyā live.

12 In the excellent *tīrtha* called Surparaka
are two yajña platforms,
Pāṣāṇa and Punaścandra,
dedicated to mahā-ātmaned Paraśurāma.

13 There also is the Aśoka-*tīrtha*
full of āśramas, O Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira.
In the land of the Pāṇḍyas
are the Agastya and Vāruṇa *tīrthas.*

14 Son of Kuntī, bull-brave hero,
among the Pāṇḍyas
there is also the Kumārī-*tīrtha.*
Let me now describe Tāmraparṇī,

15 Where the gods practised severe tapasyā
in order to obtain a mahā-reward;
here also
is three-worlds-famed Gokarṇ a,

16 Full of cool water, auspicious;
tāta, my child, it is productive
of immense holy merit;
it is inaccessible to impure-minded men.

17 Near that *tīrtha* is the āśrama
of Agastya's disciple –
the āśrama itself is known
as Devasama.

18 There is also the Vaidūrya hill,
gem-rich and merit-bestowing;
on its peak is fruit-root-and-water-abundant
Agastya āśrama.

19 O lord of men! Let me now give you
the names of sacred places, āśramas,
rivers and lakes
that are in Surāṣṭra.

20 According to Brahmins,
on the sea-coast is Camasodbhedana,
and Prabhāsa, which is said to be
the *tīrtha* of the gods.

21 The *tīrtha* called Piṇḍāraka
is visited by ascetics
and produces great merit;
the Ujjayanta hill fulfils all desires.

22 The deva-ṛṣi Nārada
has a śloka on it;
it is an ancient verse;
Yudhiṣṭhira, let me recite it:

23 *The man who does tapasyā*
on bird-and-beast-filled
Ujjayanta hill in Surāṣṭra
is worshipped in heaven.

24 There is also the sacred Dvāravatī-*tīrtha*
where Madhusūdana-Krishna lives –
the Eternal Divinity,
the embodiment of Sanātana Dharma.

25 Veda-knowing Brahmins
and those who comprehend
the Adhyātmā philosophy
say mahātmā Krishna is Sanātana Dharma.

26 Govinda-Krishna is purest of the pure,
the best of the merit-worthy,
the most auspicious
of all that is auspicious;
lotus-eyed Krishna is the eternal
god of gods,

27 The undecaying Ātman, the decaying-body-ātman,
the supreme Īśvara, Parameśvara,
the Knower-of-the-Field, the inconceivable Hari,
and he lives in Dvāravatī-*tīrtha*.

SECTION EIGHTY-NINE

1 Now I will describe
the merit-producing *tīrthas*
that can be found in the west,
in the land of the Ānartas (continued Dhaumya)

2 Flowing steadily westwards
is the holy river Narmadā,
graced with mango and bamboo
and *priyaṅgu*.

3 All the *tīrthas*, all sacred rivers,
forests and mountains
that exist in the three worlds, all the gods,
Brahmā-Pitāmaha,

4 The Siddhas, ṛṣis, Cāraṇas,
always come to bathe
in the holy waters of the Narmadā,
O excellent Bharata of the Kauravas.

5 I have heard that the āśrama of ṛṣi Viśravā
was on its banks,
and lord-of-wealth human-vehicled Kubera
was born there.

6 The Vaidūrya hill is also there;
its slopes are graced
by perennially-green trees,
lush with fruit and flower.

7 Mahārāja, on the top of that hill
is a holy lake
lovely with lotuses,
and visited by gods and gandharvas.

8 Mahārāja! That hill is full
of the most marvellous sights;
it is like heaven itself;
it is visited by all the divine ṛṣis.

9 O destroyer of hostile cities,
there is the river Viśvāmitra
named after the rāja-ṛṣi;
it is studded with *tīrthas.*

10 Nahuṣa's son Yayāti, falling from heaven,
landed on the banks of this river
among pious men,
and obtained the eternal realm of Dharma.

11 There also is the holy Puṇya lake,
the mountain called Maināka,
and another fruit-and-root-rich hill
Asita.

12 Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Pāṇḍu,
there is the merit-laden āśrama of Kakṣasena,
and the famed āśrama
of Cyavana.

13 Mahārāja! A little tapasyā here produces
the highest fulfilment.
O finest of serene men,
there is also the Jambūmārga āśrama,

14 Filled with birds and deer,
and frequented by ṛṣis of calm mind.
There is also, O rājā,
the sacred, ascetic-frequented

15 Ketumālā-*tīrthas;* as well as
the Medhyā and the Gaṅgādvāra,
and the Brahmin-visited
Saindhava forest.

16 The sacred lake of Pitāmaha-Brahmā
is known as Puṣkara;
it is favoured by ṛṣis,
Siddhas and Vānaprasthas.

17 O best of the Kurus!
Impelled by a desire to receive its shelter,
Prajāpati-Brahmā once recited
this chant in Puṣkara:

18 *If a good man even wishes to go to Puṣkara,*
if he even imagines it,
his faults are cleansed,
and he finds heaven.

SECTION NINETY

1 Let me now, O tiger-among-rājās
(continued Dhaumya),
tell you about the *tīrthas*
of the northern region.

2 Listen carefully, O heroic lord.
An attentive listener
gets all the auspicious benefits
of śraddhā-devotion.

3 There flows the mahā-sacred Sarasvatī
whose banks slope gently;
there flows the ocean-rushing,
tumultuous Yamunā.

4 There is the sacred *tīrtha*
called Plakṣāvataraṇa,
where Brahmins offer worship
after bathing in the Sarasvatī.

5 There is the famous celestial *tīrtha*
called Agniśira,
where Sahadeva performed a yajña
after measuring the ground
by a single throw of a branch
of a *śami* tree.

6 That is why, Yudhiṣṭhira,
Indra himself praised Sahadeva
in a śloka that is even today
chanted by Brahmins.

7 O tiger-strong Kaurava! Sahadeva worshipped Agni
on the Yamunā
and offered hundreds of thousands of *dakṣiṇās*
in charity.

8 The mahā-illustrious rājā Bharata
is said to have performed
as many as thirtyfive
Aśvamedhas here.

9 I have heard that Śarabhaṅga,
who in the past
did so much to please Brahmins,
had his sacred āśrama here.

10 O Pṛthā-Kuntī's son, the river Sarasvatī
is offered pūjā here by pious men;
in the past Vālakhilyas
offered yajñas here, mahārāja.

11 Foremost of men Yudhiṣṭhira,
in this region
are famed Dṛṣadvatī, Nyagrodha,
Puṇya and Pāñcālya,

12 Dālbhyaghoṣa and Dālbhya,
as well as mahātmā Suvrata's āśrama,
known and praised
in the three worlds.

13 The āśramas called Etāvarṇa
and Avarṇa
are also located here;
these are highly merit-producing.

14 O finest of the Bharatas! Here ṛṣis,
learned in the Vedas and Vedic rituals,
performed a large number of prolonged,
excellent yajñas.

15 Here also is Viśākhayūpa-*tīrtha*
visited in the past
by Indra, Varuṇa and the gods,
and sanctified by their tapasyā.

16 Here is the lovely, holy forest
of Palāśa, where the mahā-illustrious,
mahā-fortune-favoured mahā-ṛṣi Jamadagni
performed many yajñas,

17 While all the major rivers
in their embodied forms,
bringing their holy waters,
stood reverently around that incomparable ṛṣi.

18 Valiant mahārāja! Here Viśvāvasu himself,
observing the yajña-*dīkṣā* being performed
by the mahātmā ṛṣi,
chanted this śloka:

19 *When mahātmā Jamadagni*
worshipped the gods,
the rivers offered honey
to the officiating Brahmins.

20 Gandharvas, Yakṣas, rākṣasas,
apsarās, Kirātas, and Kinnaras –
the area inhabited
and frequented by them,

21 Yudhiṣṭhira, is Gaṅgādvāra, where the Gaṅgā
cuts through the king of mountains.
Brahmā-ṛṣis consider this, O rājā,
exceptionally sacred.

22 O Kaurava descendant! Sanatkumara
was among the first to visit Kanakhala,
Here is the mountain Puru
where Pururavas was born,

23 And where Bhṛgu practised tapasyā,
surrounded by mahā-ṛṣis.
That is why that āśrama, O rājā,
has become known by the name of Bhṛgutuṅga.

24 O bull-brave Bharata!
Who is Past, Present and Future,
who is Nārāyaṇa, lord Prabhu-Viṣṇu,
who is the eternal Puruṣottama –

25 His supremely auspicious āśrama
can be found there, in Badarī,
celebrated in the three worlds
from ancient times.

26 Near Badarī, O rājā,
where now the Gaṅgā runs cool,
it once flowed warm,
and her banks were covered with goldwash.

27 Mahā-fortune-favoured and mahā-radiant
ṛṣis and gods come here daily
to namaskāra
the radiant god Viṣṇu.

28 Where Nārāyaṇa is,
the Eternal Paramātmā,
there is the universe
with all its holy *tīrthas.*

29 He is Pure
He the Supreme Brahmā
He the Tīrtha
He the Forest of Tapasyā
He is the First
The Foremost of the gods
He the Parameśvara the Lord of all life.

30 He is the First Creator
He the Supreme Goal
Śāstra-knowers know him
And their sorrows cease.

31 Where Madhusūdana, the Mahā-Yogī,
the Primal Divinity, lives,
there live the divine ṛṣis, the Siddhas,
and all the ascetics
It is the holiest of holy places.

32 Never have any doubts
about the sanctity of this place
I have described to you
the sacred spots of the earth, O finest of men,

33 And named the various *tīrthas.*
They are all visited
by the Vasus, Sādhyas, Ādityas,
Maruts, Aśvins, and mahātmā

34 Ṛṣis. Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira, visit these *tīrthas*
with your mahā-fortune-favoured brothers
and Brahmins,
and be rid of your anxieties.

SECTION NINETY-ONE

1 O Kaurava descendant!
Even as Dhaumya was speaking
(Vaiśampāyana continued), the mahā-radiant ṛṣi
Lomaśa happened to pass that way.

2 The eldest Pāṇḍava, Yudhiṣṭhira,
with his followers and Brahmins
sat around Lomaśa,
like the gods around Śakra-Indra.

3 Yudhiṣṭhira greeted him reverently;
then Dharma's son
enquired the reason of his visit
and his travels.

4 Mahā-minded Lomaśa was pleased
by the sweet courtesy of Yudhiṣṭhira,
and delighted the Pāṇḍavas
with his gentle reply:

5 "Kuntī's son, Yudhiṣṭhira, travelling in the worlds
wherever I wished,
I went to Śakra-Indra's abode
and saw the chief god.

6 I saw your brother too,
heroic ambidextrous Savyasācī-Arjuna
sitting on half of Śakra-Indra's seat,
and I was mahā-surprised

7 To see him relax in that way.
O tiger-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira!
The chief of the gods said to me,
'Go to the brave sons of Pāṇḍu.'

8 So I hurried here to meet you
and your brothers,
because asked to do so by Indra
and mahā-ātmaned Arjuna.

9 *Tāta*, child, Pāṇḍu's son, I will tell you, O rājā,
something that will please you
and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī and the ṛṣis.
Listen carefully.

10 O bull brave Bharata! Lord!
Mahā-muscled Pātha-Arjuna has succeeded
in getting from Rudra-Śiva that incomparable weapon
you sent him to heaven to acquire.

11 It is called the Brahmaśira;
it rose from the *amṛta* of the churned ocean;
Rudra-Śiva got it through tapasyā;
Śavyasācī-Arjuna has it

12 Now, together with the mantras
for firing and recalling it,
and the mantras for repentance and *maṅgala*-blessing.
Vajra, Daṇḍa,

13 O Kaurava descendant, and other weapons
have also been obtained
by incalculably powerful Arjuna
from Yama, Kubera, Varuṇa and Indra.

14 From Viśvāvasu's son he has learnt
vocal and instrumental music,
singing and Veda-chanting
with complete mastery.

15 With all the weapons in his possession,
and with his knowledge
of the Gandharva-Veda,
your third brother Arjuna lives happily.

16 Now let me tell you, Yudhiṣṭhira,
what the chief of the gods
specifically said to me.
Listen carefully.

17 'Your wanderings will take you
to the world of men; no doubt of that;
when you reach there,
tell Yudhiṣṭhira this:

18 *Your brother Arjuna will return to you*
after acquiring all weapons,
and doing mahā-deeds for the gods
that they cannot themselves do.

19 *Continue your tapasyā with your brothers;*
there is nothing higher
than tapasyā;
tapasyā bears mahā-fruits.

20 *O bull-brave Bharata,*
I am fully aware that Karṇa
has mahā-enthusiasm, mahā-energy,
mahā-bravery and mahā-strength.

21 *In a mahā-battle he has no equal,*
he is a maha expert archer,
knows all about mahā-war-weapons
and he wears the finest armour.

22 *In these qualities Āditya's illustrious son Karṇa*
resembles Maheśvara Śiva's son Kārtikeya himself
I also know how skilled and brave
Arjuna is.

23 *Karṇa is not one-sixteenth*
of Pārtha-Arjuna on the battlefied.
The fear that you have of Karṇa,
O foe-chasister,

24 *Will disappear when ambidexterous Savyasācī Arjuna*
returns from heaven.
Regarding the tīrthas *you intend visiting,*
Lomaśa will speak to you.

25 *Whatever he tells you*
about the fruits of tapasyā and tīrthas,
accept reverentially,
without any disagreement."

SECTION NINETY-TWO

1 "Yudhiṣṭhira, let me now tell you,"
Lomaśa continued, "what Arjuna said.
He said, 'Make Yudhiṣṭhira
assiduously practise dharma.

2 You who are excellent in tapasyā,
you know the highest dharma,
the finest tapasyā,
the eternal dharma of rājās.

3 You are the best means of ennobling men.
Persuade the Pāṇḍavas
to collect the merits
of visiting *tīrthas.*

4 Do the best you can to make
Yudhiṣṭhira visit the *tīrthas*
and give away cows in charity.'
Arjuna said this to me.

5 'Let him visit all the *tīrthas*
under your protection.
Guard him from rākṣasas
in remote and difficult areas.

6 O best of Brahmins, just as Dadhīca
protected Devendra-Indra,
and Aṅgiras protected the sun,
should you ptotect Kuntī's sons from rākṣasas.

7 Hill-huge rākṣasas obstruct the ways.
If you extend protection
to the Pāṇḍavas,
the rākṣasas will be repulsed.'

8 Indra asked me,
and Arjuna appointed me your guide.
I will travel with you
and protect you at every step.

9 O descendant of Kuru,
I have already visited the *tīrthas* twice.
Seeing them with you
will be my third time.

10 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
Manu and other pure-deed ṛṣis
visited the *tīrthas,*
because visiting them removes all fears.

11 O descendant of Kuru,
ill-minded men, self-indulging men,
wicked men and uncultured men
do not bathe in *tīrthas.*

12 But you are steady in dharma,
you are wise in dharma,
you speak the truth,
you will be freed from all fears.

13 Son of Pāṇḍu, Yudhiṣṭhira,
you are like rājā Yayātī,
or rājā Bhagīratha,
or any other ṛṣi."

14 "Happiness so floods me,"
replied Yudhiṣṭhira,
"that I have no words to reply with.
What can be more fortunate
than that a man should be remembered
by Devarāja-Indra?

15 What can be more fortunate
than having you as guide,
having Dhanañjaya-Arjuna as brother,
and being remembered by Vāsava-Indra?

16 *Bhagavan*! Revered one! What you have said
about the darshan of the *tīrthas*,
was already my intention to do,
after listening to Dhaumya.

17 Brahmin, I have made up my mind.
I am ready to go
on a pilgrimage of *tīrtha*-darshan
whenever you choose."

18 Lomaśa said to Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
who had made up his mind:
"Mahārāja, travel light.
That way, you will travel faster."

19 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "Let mendicants,
Brahmins and yogīs
who cannot bear hunger and thirst,
and other hardships of travel,
who are susceptible to cold,
stay back.

20 Let all those who live on sweets,
and relish cooked food,
or food that is sucked or drunk,
and meat-eaters stay back.

21 Let those who depend on cooks
stay back.
Let those citizens who have loyally followed me
till now,

22 And whom I have taken great care
to support,
now return to the capital
of mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

23 He will in course of time
give them what they deserve.
If that great ruler
does not do them justice,

24 The king of Pāñcāla will do so,
At least for our satisfaction and welfare."

25 The deeply disturbed Brahmins,
yogīs and citizens
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
returned to Hastināpura.

26 Because he felt tenderly
for Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
the son of Ambika, Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
received them and treated them well.

27 Kuntī's son, rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
his mind soothed by the words of Lomaśa,
stayed in Kāmyaka
for three nights.

SECTION NINETY-THREE

1 When the Brahmins who lived in the forest
saw Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
preparing to depart,
they came and said to him:

2 "O rājā, you are going
on a pilgrimage to the *tīrthas*
with your brothers,
accompanied by the mahā-ātmaned ṛṣi Lomaśa.

3 Mahārāja, son of Pāṇḍu,
great descendant of Kuru,
take us with you. Without you,
we will never get to see the *tīrthas*.

4 O lord of men! They are filled with dangers;
wild beasts lurk on the way;
some are said to be inaccessible,
others reached
after much hardship.
Small groups cannot go there.

5 Undeteriorating hero,
all your brothers are heroes –
brave bowmen all. With you to protect us,
we will be safe.

6 O ruler of the world, with your help
we will be able
to acquire all the merits that come
from visiting *tīrthas*.

7 Protected by your prowess,
we will be cleansed of all our wrong-doing
after purificatory baths
in the *tīrthas*.

8 O great Bharata!
Kārtavīrya-Arjuna, Aṣṭaka, Lomapāda –
whatever these great royal ṛṣis
and ascetics obtained

9 By bathing in the *tīrthas*,
on Mahendra and other mountains,
in inaccessible regions,
you too will succeed in getting.

10 Prabhāsa and other *tīrthas*,
Mahendra and other mountains,
Gaṅgā and other rivers,
the waved-leaf *plakṣa* fig and other trees –

11 All these, O lord of the earth,
we would like to see with you.
Ruler of men,
if you respect Brahmins,

12 Then do as we ask you –
and prosper.
Tīrthas are known to be infested
with malevolent rākṣasas,

13 Who obstruct men of dharma.
Protect us from them,
Ruler of men, visit all the *tīrthas*
recommended by Dhaumya, wise Nārada,

14 And Lomaśa –
all ṛṣis of unparalleled mahā-tapasyā;
Lomaśa is a deva-ṛṣi.
O lord of men, when you travel,

15 Protected by the ṛṣi Lomaśa
and accompanied by us,
all your wrongs will be erased."
When rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, standing

16 With Bhīma and his other brothers,
heard these sentiments from the Brahmins,
his eyes were filled
with sudden tears of joy.

17 Taking Lomaśa's permission,
and that of the family purohita Dhaumya,
finest of the Pāṇḍavas, rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and his brothers,

18 Along with perfect-featured Draupadī,
made preparations to leave.
At that time mahā-fortune-favoured Vyāsa,
Parvata and Nārada,

19 All supremely intelligent ṛṣis,
visited the Kāmyaka-forest
to meet the Pāṇḍavas.
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira offered them pujā-respect;

20 And they said: "Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma,
Nakula and Sahadeva,
keep your minds free, your hearts pure
for the *tīrtha*-pilgrimage.

21 Brahmins have said
that discipline of one's body is 'Man-Vow',
and purification of one's mind
is akin to a 'God-Vow'.

22 The mind that is not assailed by impure thoughts
is known as pure.
Show compassion for all, O lord of men,
and visit the *tīrthas.*

23 With your body purified by the 'Man-Vow'
and your mind by the 'God-Vow',
you will obtain
the fruits of *tīrthas.*"

24 The Pāṇḍavas said, "So be it",
and requested the human and divine ṛṣis
to perform
the preliminary rites.

25 O Indra-among-rājās Yudhiṣṭhira!
They touched the feet
of the ṛṣi Lomaśa,
of Dvaipāyana Kṛṣṇa-Vyāsa,
of Nārada,
and the *devarṣi* Parvata.

26 On the day following the full moon
of Mārgaśīrṣa,
during the ascendancy of the Puṣya constellation,
they started their journey.

27 Dressed in bark-cloth and deer-skin,
their hair matted,
impenetrable armour on their bodies,
they set out eastwards.

28 They were accompanied by Indrasena
and other attendants,
with many cooks and servants,
in fourteen chariots altogether.

29 O Janamejaya! The Pāṇḍavas carried swords
and other weapons,
quivers strapped on their backs, bows in hand,
as they turned their faces eastward.

SECTION NINETY-FOUR

1 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "Finest of deva-ṛṣis,
I know, I am not without merit,
but still feel no other king
has suffered like me.

2 My enemies have no real merit,
no interest in dharma,
and yet they prosper. O Lomaśa!
Why do they prosper?"

3 "Rājā," replied Lomaśa,
"do not allow yourself to suffer
because others prosper
as a result of their indulgence in adharma.

4 Adharma may seem to bring good fruits
like prosperity
or vanquishing one's enemies –
but it destroys one's very roots.

5 I have seen many anti-gods, Daityas and Dānavas,
prosper by adharma –
I have also seen them work out
their own ruin.

6 I observed all this in the Deva-yuga.
The gods practised dharma
and the anti-gods
rejected it.

7 O Bharat descendant! The gods visited the *tīrthas,*
and the anti-gods refused.
The anti-gods were swollen
with their arrogant adharma.

8 Self-importance bred conceit,
and conceit bred anger;
anger led to evil tendencies
and absolute disregard of shame.

9 Shame disregarded, decent behaviour disappeared.
Shamelessness,
proneness to evil, uncivilised behaviour
reached such proportions
that forgiveness and fame and sva-dharma
left them completely.

10 O king! Lakṣmī, auspicious goddess, joined the gods;
and Alakṣmī, inauspicious goddess,
the anti-gods.
With Alakṣmī on their side,
pride drove the anti-gods
into senseless indulgence.

11 Soon enough Kali possessed
the Daityas and Dānavas,
and Kali steadily drove them
to their ruin.

12 Possessed by pride,
they abandoned the rituals and yajñas;
reason left them, ego took over,
and they were doomed.

13 Infamy stained the Daitya antigods,
and destroyed them.
The gods, however, visiting *tīrthas*
of seas, rivers, lakes

14 And various dharma-śālās,
followed the meritorious path;
they cleansed themselves
by bathing and tapasyā,

15 By yajñas, *dakṣiṇās* and blessings,
and they prospered.
By abandoning thoughts of evil
and practising dharma,

16 And visiting *tīrthas,* they prospered enormously.
Therefore, king,
go with your younger brothers
and bathe in the *tīrthas.*

17 O finest of rājās! The king who abides
by the dictates of dharma
defeats all his enemies
and extends his kingdom.

18 Regain your royal fortune.
This is the time-honoured way.
Just as rājā Nṛga, Uśīnara,
and Śibi,

19 Bhagīratha, Vasumanas, Gaya,
Puru and Pururavas,
by practising tapasyā
and touching the holy waters

20 Of the *tīrthas,*
and meeting the shining mahātmās,
obtained fame, wealth, and holy merit,
you too,

21 O Indra-among-rājās, will acquire great prosperity.
Just as Ikṣvāku
and his sons, friends and followers,
as Mucukunda, Māndhātā, Maruta,

22 As the gods through their excellent tapasyā,
as the divine ṛṣis
obtained fame,
you too, O Yudhiṣṭhira,

23 Will achieve renown.
The sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
trapped by their adharma and delusion,
will perish like the Daitya anti-gods."

SECTION NINETY-FIVE

1 Ruler of the world (Vaiśampāyana continued),
the Pāṇḍavas,
journeying from place to place,
came at last to Naimiṣa-forest.

2 They bathed in the sacred *tīrtha*-waters
of the Gomatī river,
and, O descendant of Bharata,
gave wealth and cows in charity.

3 They repeatedly offered worship
to the gods, *pitṛs,* and Brahmins,
and spent some time in the various *tīrthas*
at Kanyā,
Aśva, Goti, and the Kālakoṭi
and Vṛṣaprastha hills.

4 O lord of the earth! Then they went to Bahudā
and offered oblations there.
Arriving at the yajña-ground
of the mighty gods, Prāyaga,

5 The truth-observing men
purified their bodies by bathing
in the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā,
and doing tapasyā.

6 The mahā-ātmaned heroes,
purified of their wrong-doings,
gave wealth to Brahmins.
Going to the altar of Prajāpati,

7 Worshipped by men-of-tapasyā,
Pāṇḍu's son offered his adoration.
The excellent heroes
performed tapasyā there,

8 Gratifying the Brahmins with gifts
of fruit and ghee.
They moved on to Mahīdhara,
sanctified by the noble

9 Rāja-ṛṣi rich-in-dharma
Gaya.
Here is the hill called Gayaśira
where flows the sacred river

10 Whose enchanting banks are beautiful
with clumps of cane.
On that divine and most sacred
of holy peaks,

11 Is the marvellously sacred *tīrtha*
called Brahma Lake,
where Bhagavan Agastya once went
to meet Vaivasvata-Yama,

12 For that is where Yama, god of eternal justice,
Dharmarāja Sanātana, lives.
All rivers have their source in that peak,
O lord of the earth.

13 Pināka-wielding Mahādeva-Śiva
stays near it.
The brave Pāṇḍavas practised the rite
of the Four-Month Vow,

14 As well as the Mahā-ṛṣi-yajña
Here is the undecaying mahā-banyan.
Any yajña performed here
brings everlasting fruit.

15 The Pāṇḍavas began fasting there
with a serene mind.
Hundreds of tapasyā-rich Brahmins flocked
to see them.

16 The old-in-knowledge, Veda-wise Brahmins
also took
the Four-Month Vow,
as laid down by the ancient ṛṣis
and, forming a court-like assembly,
narrated sacred kathās.

17 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
the wonderfully learned, vow-strict Brahmin
Śamaṭha spoke of Gaya,
the son of Amūtaraya.

18 "Amūtaraya's son is Gaya,"
said Śamaṭha,
"an excellent rājā-ṛṣi. O Bharata descendant,
let me recite his sacred deeds.

19 He performed many yajñās here;
food and *dakṣiṇā*-gifts were lavished;
rice was cooked in hundreds
of thousands of heaps.

20 Ghee and curds formed
hundreds of lakes and rivers,
and thickly cooked curries flowed
in thousands of streams.

21 O rājā! Day after day they were given
to all who asked.
In additon, Brahmins were fed
with specially-cooked dishes.

22 O Bharata descendant,
when the time of *dakṣiṇā*-offering came,
the Veda-chanting seemed to reach heaven;
nothing else could be heard.

23 O rājā! The sacred sounds filled the earth,
the sky, the points of the firmament,
heaven itself –
and many mahā-wonders were seen.

24 O bull brave Bharata,
delighted with the food and drink,
men went about from country to country,
chanting:

25 *Who wants to eat more*
In the yajña of Gaya?
Twentyfive hills of food
Still remain uneaten.

26 *What rāja-ṛṣi Gaya has done*
Was never done in the past,
What radiant Gaya has done
Will never be done in the future.

27 *The gods are so satiated*
With the offerings of ghee
They are unable to eat
Anything of anything else.

28 *Who can count the* dakṣiṇā
Given at Gaya's yajña,
Like grains of sand on earth,
Stars in the sky,
And raindrops in a downpour.

29 O lord of the earth, descendant of Kuru,
innumerable such yajñas
were performed on the banks
of this lake."

SECTION NINETY-SIX

1 Kuntī's son Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
known for his generous *dakṣiṇās,*
came to Agastya's āśrama
and stayed in Durjaya.

2 Best of eloquent speakers
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
asked how Agastya had killed Vātāpi
in that place.

3 What was the greatness
of that cannibalistic Daitya anti-god,
and why was the anger of the mahātmā ṛṣi
roused against him?

4 O descendant of Kuru (Lomaśa said),
an anti-god named Ilvala
lived in Maṇimati.
His younger brother was Vātāpi.

5 Ilvala, son of Diti, once said
to a tapasyā-dedicated Brahmin,
"Illustrious one, bhagavan,
give me a son the equal of Indra."

6 The Brahmin was unable to find
an equal of Vāsava-Indra,
with the result that the anti-god
lost his temper.

7 From that day, O Indra-among-rājās, the antigod
became an implacable destroyer of Brahmins.
With his māyā
he turned his brother into a goat.

8 Vātāpi, in his goat-form,
was cooked,
and the meat served to Brahmins,
Vātāpi wanted to kill Brahmins.

9 Ilvala could summon anyone he wished
with the power of his voice,
even if the man
lived in Vaivasvata-Yama's abode.

10 So Vātāpi was transformed by Ilvala
into a goat and, cooked,
he was served to Brahmins;
and then summoned back.

11 Vātāpi, the mahā anti-god,
a thorn in the flesh of Brahmins,
summoned by the māyā-words
of Ilvala,

12 Ripped himself out of the bodies
of the Brahmins
who had eaten him, O rājā,
laughing loudly each time, O lord of the earth.

13 O rājā! The Brahmins were fed
again and again,
and the vindictive Ilvala destroyed them
again and again.

14 Meanwhile Bhagavān Agastya
chanced to come upon his *pitṛs*
hanging head downwards
in a pit.

15 He asked the suspended spirits
of his ancestors:
"What has happened?
Why do you tremble, hanging like this?"
The Brahma-knowing *pitṛs* said:
"For lack of offspring."

16 They added, "We are the spirits
of your forefathers.
We hang in this fashion
because we lack offspring.

17 Agastya, if you have an excellent son,
we can still be saved from hell,
and you too can achieve
the blessed son-state."

18 The powerful truth-and-dharma-observing ṛṣi
replied:
"*Pitṛs,* I will do as you say
and save you from son-less despair."

19 The bhagavan ṛṣi began to think of ways
of perpetuating his race.
He could not find any girl
worthy of conceiving a son for him.

20 He took the loveliest parts
of different animals,
put them together,
and created a paragon of a woman.

21 The mahā-tapasyā muni
gave the girl he had created
to the rājā of the Vidarbhas
who was then doing tapasyā for offspring.

22 She was born there,
that exquisitely lovely girl,
as dazzling as lightning,
and her loveliness increased every day.

23 O Bharata descendant! The moment she was born,
the king of the Vidarbhas
joyfully announced her birth
to the assembly of Brahmins.

24 Ruler of the earth,
all those Brahmins blessed her;
the assembly of the twice-born
named her Lopāmudrā.

25 Mahārāja! The breathtakingly beautiful girl,
so blessed, grew quickly in loveliness
like a lotus blossoming in water,
like flames flickering in fire.

26 O Indra-among rājās! When she came of age,
one hundred ornamented girls
and one hundred maids waited always
on the fortune-favoured lady.

27 And, surrounded by one hundred maids
and one hundred ornamented girls,
she shone like the star Rohiṇī
in the sky.

28 And though she was of age, for fear of Agastya
none dared ask for her hand,
because she was so exquisite,
so incomparably excellent.

29 The truth-speaking girl had the allure
of an apsarā,
and she delighted her father and relatives
with her manners.

30 When she attained puberty,
her father, the king of Vidarbha,
began to wonder:
"To whom will I give my daughter?"

SECTION NINETY-SEVEN

1 When Agastya thought she was ready
to assume domestic responsibilities,
he went to the king of Vidarbha
and said:

2 "O rājā,
I wish to be a father of a son;
O lord of the earth, I have come to you
for the hand of Lopāmudrā."

3 The king heard the muni's request,
and was deeply perplexed.
Though unwilling to agree,
he was unable to refuse.

4 The world-ruler went to his wife
and said,
"The mahā-ṛṣi has tremendous powers;
angeered, his curse can burn us.

5 Tell me what I should do."
His queen
listened to him carefully
but did not say a word.

6 Seeing the king and his wife
sitting there sorrowing,
Lopāmudrā came to them,
and said what was proper:

7 "Lord of the earth,
do not grieve for my sake.
Give me to Agastya,
and save yourself by this bestowal."

8 O lord-of-the-earth Yudhiṣṭhira!
At his daughter's request,
the rājā bestowed her on mahā-ātmaned Agastya
with the necessary rites.

9 Accepting Lopāmudrā as his wife,
Agastya said to her,
"Throw away all your mahā-expensive dresses
and ornaments."

10 The large-eyed lady with plantain-shaped thighs
immediately discarded
all her mahā-expensive
glittering luxurious dresses.

11 She put on bark-dress and deer-skin;
the large-eyed lady
became her husband's partner
in ascetic vows.

12 They went to the source of the Gaṅgā,
and the excellent bhagavan ṛṣi
with his willing wife
practised the severest tapasyā.

13 She was happy with her work
and served him diligently;
he too was pleased,
and lavished his love on her.

14 O lord the earth! A long time passed.
One day the bhagavan ṛṣi saw Lopāmudrā,
radiant with ascetic glory,
coming after her bath.

15 He was pleased with her attentions,
her purity and discipline,
here grace and beauty, and he asked her
to have intercourse with him.

16 Lovingly and lovably bashful,
she folded her palms in *añjali*
before him,
and said to bhagavan Agastya:

17 "O ṛṣi, a husband certainly
expects children from his wife,
but you should at least grant
one small request of mine.

18 Brahmin, unite with me on a bed
like the one
that I used to sleep in
in my father's palace.

19 I want you to be garlanded
with flowers,
and I want to wear all the ornaments
that I like most.

20 I will not go to you dressed
in my tattered, dusty clothes.
O Brahmin ṛṣi! There is nothing inauspicious
in wearing ornaments."

21 “Lopāmudrā, slim-waisted beauty,”
 said Agastya,
“I do not have the riches that your father has,
 O fortune-favoured one.”

22 She replied, “Holy one, you are rich in tapasyā.
 Your tapasyā can instantly bring to me
all the riches
 in the world of men.”

23 “What you say is right,”
 replied Agastya,
“but that would be a waste of tapasyā.
 Let me not misuse my powers.”

24 “My fertile period will not last forever,”
 Lopāmudrā said,
“and I do not want intercourse
 at any other time.

25 Nor do I wish
 that you should diminish in dharma.
Find a way to grant my wish
 without wasting your tapasyā.”

26 “Gracious lady,” said Agastya,
 “if your mind is made up,
I will find the necessary riches.
 Wait here till I return.”

SECTION NINETY-EIGHT

1 Agastya went away (Lomaśa said)
 to beg wealth from king Śrutarvas,
who was thought to be richer
 than other kings.

2 Getting news of the arrival
 of the jar-born ṛṣi,
the king and his ministers went
 to receive him.

3 The king offered him *arghya,*
and did *añjali* before him,
and humbly enquired the reason
of the ṛṣi's visit.

4 "Lord of earth," replied Agastya,
"I have come to you for wealth,
Give me whatever amount
you can spare."

5 The rājā placed the accounts of his treasury
before the ṛṣi
and said,
"Take whatever you wish to take."

6 The honest ṛṣi saw
that royal income and expenditure were equal,
and realised that to take anything
would be to harm others.

7 He went with Śrutarvas to rājā Bradhnaśva
who came out to receive them
and give them
a courteous welcome

8 With the *arghya* offering
and water to wash their feet.
Then he gently enquired the reason
for their visit.

9 "Ruler of the world," said Agastya,
"I have come to you for wealth.
Give me whatever amount
you can spare."

10 That rājā too placed the accounts of his treasury
before the two
and said,
"You are free to take what you like."

11 The honest ṛṣi saw
that royal income and expenditure were equal,
and realised that to take anything
would be to harm others.

12 Agastya, Śrutarvas and Bradhnaśva
went to Purukutsa's son Trasadasyu
who was reputed to possess
huge wealth.

13 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira!
Getting news of the arrival of three visitors,
the mahā-minded Trasadasyu came out
to receive them.

14 O lord of the earth Yudhiṣṭhira!
The greatest of the Ikṣvāku rājās
offered them a royal welcome
and enquired about their visit.

15 "Lord of the world," said Agastya,
"I have come to you for wealth.
Give me whatever amount
you can spare."

16 The rājā placed the accounts of his treasury
before the three
and said,
"You are free to take what you like."

17 The honest ṛṣi saw
that royal income and expenditure were equal,
and realised that to take anything
would be to harm others.

18 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira!
All the three kings looked at each other;
then they looked at the mahā-muni
and said in one voice:

19 "Brahmin, there is a Dānava anti-god
named Ilvala
who is supposed to be fabulously wealthy.
Let us ask from him."

20 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! The suggestion
that they approached Ilvala for wealth
seemed reasonable,
so they went to him.

SECTION NINETY-NINE

1 Getting news that a mahā-ṛṣi and some kings
were coming,
Ilvala and his relatives went out
to welcome them with pūjā-respect.

2 O Kaurava descendant Yudhiṣṭhira!
Finest of anti-gods Ilvala offered them hospitality
and fed them the flesh
of his goat-brother Vātāpi.

3 Seeing the mahā-antigod Vātāpi
cooked in that way,
all the rāja-ṛṣis were shocked
and nearly fainted.

4 The greatest of ṛṣis Agastya
said to the rāja-ṛṣis,
"Be comforted. Leave it to me
to eat the mahā-antigod."

5 The mahā-ṛṣi relaxed
on a comfortable seat,
and the Indra-among-Daityas anti-god Ilvala
laughingly served the meat.

6 Agastya ate up all that was served
of Vātāpi.
Meal over, the anti-god Ilvala
summoned Vātāpi.

7 Yudhiṣṭhira, *tāta,* child, the mahatma ṛṣi
let out a mahā-fart
with the tremendous sound
of a thunderclap.

8 Ilvala kept shouting,
"Vātāpi! Come out!"
O rājā! The greatest of munis Agastya
smiled and said:

9 "How can he come out?
I have digested the *asura.*"
Realising that his brother was disgested,
the mahā-antigod Ilvala became depressed.

10 He and his ministers did *añjali*
with folded palms
and said, "Why have you come?
What can I do for you?"

11 Agastya smiled and said:
"*Asura,* we have been told
that you possess great power
and enormous wealth.

12 These kings are not very wealthy,
and I need mahā-wealth.
Give me whatever you can,
without hurting anyone."

13 Ilvala respectfully said to the ṛṣi,
"If you can read my mind
and tell me,
I will give you great wealth."

14 Agastya said, "Mahā-*asura*,
you thought to give each of these rājās
ten thousand cows
and ten thousand gold coins.

15 To me, O mahā-*asura,*
you thought to give twice as much,
including a golden chariot
and two thought-swift horses."

16 "All that you say is correct,"
Ilvala said,
"except that I do not have
a golden chariot."

17 "O mahā-*asura*! Go and enquire," replied Agastya.
"I never lie. You will find your golden chariot."
Ilvala enquired –
and the chariot was golden.

18 The anti-god reluctantly gave away
enormous wealth
and the golden chariot
and the two horses Virāva and Surāva.

19 In a flash those two horses
took the rājās,
Agastya, and all the wealth
to Agastya's āśrama.

20 With Agastya's permission
the rājās returned to their kingdoms.
Agastya did all
that his wife desired.

21 "Revered husband, you have fulfilled
all my desires,"
said Lopāmudrā. "You may now father on me
a brilliant heroic son."

22 "Lovely fortune-favoured lady!
Your conduct pleases me greatly.
I have a question regarding the son
you wish to have.

23 Do you want one thousand sons,
or ten sons each equal to a hundred,
or just one son
excelling a thousand?"

24 Lopāmudrā replied, "O rich-in-tapasyā ṛṣi,
let me have one son excelling a thousand.
One good learned son
is better than many stupid ones."

25 "Very well," said the muni,
and reverently had intercourse
with his virtuous
and equally reverent wife.

26 Then he went away to the forest.
After he had left,
the child grew in her womb
for seven autumns.

27 O Bharata descendant Yudhiṣṭhira!
When the seventh year was over,
a *mahākavi* named Dṛḍhasyu emerged flame-like
from the womb.

28 The radiant mahā-Brahmin of mahā-tapasyā
born as Agastya's son
was, even from birth, profoundly learned
in the Vedas, Vedāṅgas and Upaniṣads.

29 Even as a child
he could carry loads of yajña fuel;
he was nicknamed "Idhmavāha"
or "Sacred-Fuel Carrier".

30 Muni Agastya was deeply happy
to see his son show
such lustre of character;
he was truly an excellent son.

31 O rājā! Agastya's *pitṛs* attained
the realms they desired,
and the spot became world-famous
as Agastya's āśrama.

32 O rājā! This is the āśrama of Agastya
who killed Vātāpi
of the Prahlāda race;
it is an enchanting āśrama.

33 The sacred god-and-gandharva-visited Bhāgirathī
flows nearby
like a pennant that flutters
gracefully in the sky.

34 She meanders through rocky hills,
resembling in her descent
a frightened she-snake
slithering into a hole.

35 She emerges from the matted locks
of Śambhu-Śiva's hair:
like a mother she gives her waters
to the lands of the south,
this loved one of the ocean.
Bathe in her.

36 Look, mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
at the three-worlds-celebrated Bhṛgu-*tīrtha*,
which is visited
by all the mahā-ṛṣis.

37 Bathing in it,
Paraśurāma regained his lost powers.
Son of Pāṇḍu, you, your brothers
and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī should bathe here too.

38 You will regain all the glory
that has been snatched from you
by Duryodhana,
as Paraśurāma regained his (said Lomaśa).

39 Yudhiṣṭhira, his brothers and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
bathed in the *tīrtha*
and offered worship to the *pitṛs*
and the gods.

40 After bathing there, his body seemed to blaze
with a new effulgence,
with the glory
of an invincible bull-brave hero.

41 Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira said to Lomaśa:
"Bhagavan, revered one,
why was it that Paraśurāma lost his glory?
And, *prabhu,* lord,
how did he regain it?
Tell me the story."

42 O Indra among rājās (said Lomaśa),
listen to the story
of mahā-ātmaned Daśaratha's son Rāma
and Bhṛgu's descendant wise Paraśurāma.

43 Viṣṇu took birth as the son of Daśaratha
to destroy Rāvaṇa;
we witnessed Rāma's birth
in Ayodhyā.

44 Curious, Bhṛgu's descendant Paraśurāma,
son of Ṛcika and Reṇukā,
having heard of the feats
of Daśaratha's son Rāma,

45 A hero of spotless magnificence,
went to Ayodhyā,
taking with him the bow
that destroyed the Kṣatriyas,

46 With the aim of determining the prowess
of Daśaratha's son Rāma.
Getting news of his arrival
in his kingdom, Daśaratha

47 Sent his own son Rāma
to receive Paraśurāma with due respect.
Seeing Daśaratha's son Rāma
standing with upraised weapons,

48 Paraśurāma smiled and said,
"Lord of the world, Indra-among-rājās,
use all your strength
and see if you can string

49 This Kṣatriya-destroying bow in my hand."
Rāma, Daśaratha's son, said,
"Bhagavan, revered one,
do not insult me.

50 I am a twice-born,
I know the dharma of a Kṣatriya.
We Ikṣvākus
do not like to boast."

51 Paraśurāma said to Rāma,
"Descendant of Raghu,
stop playing with words.
Here, take this bow."

52 Daśaratha's son Rāma angrily
took from Paraśurāma's hands –
the divine bow that exterminated
the Kṣatriyas.

53 O Bharata-descendant Yudhiṣṭhira!
Without the least exertion
the amazingly powerful hero strung the bow,
stretched it, and twanged it.

54 The thunderous twang sent shudders
in the hearts of all creatures.
Dasaratha's son Rāma
said to Paraśurāma:

55 "Here's your strung bow, Brahmin. What next?"
Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma
gave him a divine arrow,
and said:
"Nock it in the bow,
and draw it tight against your ear."

56 Rāma, furious, said,
"Descendant of Bhṛgu,
your insolence amazes me,
but I forgive you.

57 The grace of Brahmā Pitāmaha
has given you strength
greater than that of the Kṣatriyas,
and so you dare to insult me.

58 I give you special sight –
look at my real form!"
Bhṛgu's descendant Paraśurāma saw,
in Rāma's body,

59 The Ādityas, Vasus, Rudras,
Sādhyas, Maruts,
the *pitṛs*, the god of fire Hutāśana,
constellations, planets,

60 The gandharvas, rākṣasas, yakṣas,
rivers, *tīrthas*,
the eternal ṛṣis, the Vālakhilyas
who became Brahmā-like,

61 Deva-ṛṣis, seas, mountains,
all the Vedas
and all the Upaniṣads,
the Vaṣaṭs and yajñas,

62 The Sāmas embodied, the science of bowcraft,
clouds with rain and lightning.
O great Bharata,
O Yudhiṣṭhira,

63 Then Bhagavān Viṣṇu as Rāma
shot that arrow;
and suddenly thunder reverberated,
and mahā-meteors flashed across the sky,

64 Masses of dust and rain began to fall,
and fierce whirlpools
of terrible turbulence
convulsed the earth.

65 In front of Paraśurāma's amazed eyes,
the flaming arrow shot by Rāma
rushed back
into his hand.

66 Wonder-struck Paraśurāma
recovered his senses slowly,
like one returning back to life,
and offered his *praṇāma* to Rāma.

67 Ordered by Viṣṇu, he returned
to the mountain called Mahendra,
where he lived
in fear and shame,
and devoted himself
to mahā-tapasyā.

68 After one year, the *pitṛs,* noticing Paraśurāma
deprived of his glory and self-confidence,
and dejected,
said to him:

69 "Son, your behaviour with Viṣṇu
was not proper.
He deserves the respect and pūjā
of the three worlds.

70 Go now to the sacred river
called Vadhūsara;
bathe in its *tīrthas*
and recover your glory.

71 Paraśurāma! There is the *tīrtha* called Diptodaka
where your grandfather Bhṛgu
did tapasyā
in the Deva-yuga."

72 O Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
Paraśurāma did all that the *pitṛs* advised him,
and regained
all his lost glory.

73 *Tāta,* child, mahārāja, that is what happened
in the distant past
to Paraśurāma
when he encountered Viṣṇu.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED

1 "Excellent Brahmin," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"I would like to know in detail
about the achievements
of the wise mahā-ṛṣi Agastya."

2 O rājā! (replied Lomaṣa),
listen to the wonderful divine story
of Agastya's incalculable prowess
and glory.

3 In the Kṛta-yuga, there lived
some fearful and invincible Dānava anti-gods
called Kālakeyas –
a ghastly breed.

4 Under the leadership of Vṛtra,
they armed themselves,
and attacked Mahendra-Indra and the gods
from all sides.

5 The gods decided to get rid of Vṛtra
and, with destroyer-of-hostile-cities
Puraṁdara-Indra at their head,
they went to Brahmā.

6 They stood in front of Brahmā,
palms folded in *añjali*;
Brahmā said to them,
"Gods, I know your mind.

7 I will tell you
how Vṛtra can be killed.
There is a vastly learned mahā ṛṣi
named Dadhīca;

8 Approach him in a body,
and ask a boon.
He is a dharmātmā ṛṣi,
he will not refuse you.

9 You want victory.
Go to him in a body and tell him,
'Give us your bones
for the good of the three worlds.'

10 He will discard his flesh
and give you his bones.
Devise a weapon from those bones;
the mahā-horrific Vajra-Thunder –

11 A six-sided, horrendous, roaring mahā-weapon
capable of total enemy-annihilation.
With that Vajra,
Śatakratu-Indra will kill Vṛtra.

12 That is all. Go now and do quickly
as instructed."
The gods took leave
of Brahmā Pitāmaha,

13 And hurried to the āśrama of Dadhīca;
Nārada led them.
The thick-foliaged āśrama
on the Sarasvatī's banks

14 Hummed with the Sāma-like chants
of bees,
and the mellifluent songs of kokilas
and other birds.

15 Baffalo, boar, deer and cows
wandered freely and happily
in that āśrama,
without fear of tigers.

16 Elephants with ichor trickling
down their temples
sported in streams with she-elephants
and trumpeted joyfully.

17 All around the āśrama
were lions and tigers
resting in caves and grass thickets,
and periodically roaring.

18 Dadhīca's āśrama was lovelier than all others
because of all these sights,
The gods came as it were
to a second heaven.

19 They saw Dadhīca radiant
like the sun itself,
blazing with the graceful effulgence
of Brahmā Pitāmaha.

20 O rājā! They touched his feet
and offered him their *praṇāmas.*
Together the gods asked from him the boon
as instructed by Parameṣṭhin Brahmā.

21 Dadhīca was pleased,
and he said
to the gods:
"I will help you today:
today I will
discard my flesh."

22 Saying this, the ṛṣi
surrendered his life-breath
in front of them all.
As instructed by Brahmā,
the gods took the bones
of the lifeless ṛṣi,

23 And joyfully hurried
to Tvaṣṭṛ, Divine Artificer,
and announced the success
of their mission.
Overjoyed, Tvaṣṭṛ,
carefully and slowly,

24 Fashioned the Vajra,
a horrific weapon,
and said to Śakra-Indra.
"With the use of this weapon
the foes of the gods
will be reduced to ashes.

25 With your foes destroyed,
you will rule once again
peacefully in heaven."
Puraṁdara-Indra joyfully
received the Vajra
with the deepest reverence.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED ONE

1 Lomaśa continued: Flanked by the powerful gods,
Vajra-wielding Indra
went to the earth-and-sky-straddling
anti-god Vṛtra,

2 Who was protected on all sides
by massive-bodied Kālakeyas
brandishing uplifted weapons,
standing like mountain peaks.

3 A gory battle ensued, O bull-brave Bharata,
between the gods
and the Dānava-antigods;
the three worlds reeled under the mahā-impact.

4 Uplifted swords
in the hands of heroes,
aimed at each other's bodies,
clashed violently.

5 Mahārāja! Heads fell from the sky
like fruits of the palmyra tree
loosened from their stalks
toppling on the ground.

6 The golden-armoured Kālakeyas,
armed with iron-spiked maces,
charged at the gods
like fiery mobile mountains.

7 Unable to absorb the shock of the attack
by the reckless heroes,
the gods
scattered in fear.

8 When he saw the gods flee in terror
and Vṛtra muster more boldness,
thousand-eyed Sahasrākṣa-Indra
was bewildered.

9 Afraid of the Kālakeyas,
Puraṁdara-Indra personally supplicated
the lord Prabhu-Nārāyaṇa for protection
in this crisis.

10 Sanātana-Viṣṇu, seeing Śakra-Indra
paralysed with grief and fear,
added a part of his strength
to Śakra-Indra's prowess.

11 Seeing Viṣṇu help Śakra-Indra in this way,
the ṛṣis of Brahmā,
all flawless in accomplishments,
assisted Indra also.

12 Reinforced by Viṣṇu, by all the gods,
and the mahā-fortune-favoured ṛṣis,
Śakra-Indra swelled immeasurably
in strength and courage.

13 When he found that Indra
had been helped by others,
Vṛtra roared in mahā-anger;
The earth and heaven,
the mountains, the directions –
all seemed to tremble.

14 Hearing that roar,
Mahendra-Indra again was afraid;
and in desperation,
to kill the anti-god,
he hurled the Vajra
at Vṛtra, O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

15 Struck by the weapon,
gold-garlanded Vṛtra
fell as the mahā-mountain
Mandara fell when hurled
from the hand of Viṣṇu
in the distant past.

16 Unwilling to believe
that Vṛtra was dead,
or the Vajra had really
been hurled by his hand,
Śakra-Indra in fear fled
and hid in a lake.

17 The gods and the mahā-ṛṣis
were wild with joy,
and sang Indra's praises.
Joining forces,
they started to slaughter
the Vṛtra-less anti-gods.

18 Dejected, the anti-gods panicked
and fled to the fish-
and-alligatored ocean.
There they reassembled
to plan out the ruin
of the three worlds.

19 Among them the wise
had their own suggestions;
others had others.
But all were determined,
each in his own way,
to work out a plan.

20 What they finally decided
was the fearful mission
of first of all corrupting
the sources of knowledge
and the merits of tapasyā
in all good men.

21 "The worlds are supported
on tapasyā, so first
let tapasyā be destroyed.
Men with tapasyā,
men who have dharma,
and all their followers,

22 Must first be destroyed.
With their annihilation
the universe will end."
Reaching this decision
to destroy the three worlds,
the anti-gods rejoiced.

23 They turned the mountainous-
waved ocean, the gem-rich abode
of Varuṇa, into their fort.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWO

1 From their hideout, Varuṇa's ocean,
the Kāleyas
organised their efforts
for the destruction of the worlds.

2 They would, under cover of night,
angrily slink
inside secluded āśramas and holy places
and devour the munis.

3 The wicked-atmaned anti-gods
devoured one hundred and eighty Brahmins
in Vāsiṣṭha's āśrama
alone.

4 In Cyavana's Brahmin-frequented āśrama
they devoured
one hundred root-and-fruit-subsisting
munis.

5 They prowled at night,
and hid in the ocean in the day.
In the āśrama
of the ṛṣi Bharadvāja,

6 They ate two serene brahmācarī
air-and-water-subsisting Brahmins.
One by one these Dānavas harassed
all the āśramas.

7 Drunk with their physical prowess,
knowing they did not have too long to live,
the Kāleyas killed
countless Brahmins.

8 O finest of men, the anti-gods continued
to behave in this way with holy men.
No one was able
to trace them.

9 Dead bodies of emaciated
fasting ṛṣis
could be seen every morning
sprawled on the ground –

10 Some without flesh, some without blood,
without entrails, limbs torn apart;
bones lay
like heaps of conch-shells.

11 The earth was littered with the contents
of broken yajña-vessels,
splintered ghee ladles,
and ashes of sacred fires.

12 Terrorised by the Kāleyas,
bereft of Vedic studies,
vaṣaṭs, yajñas, and holy rites,
the earth looked dispirited.

13 O lord of men!
Seeing their fellowmen dying daily
in this manner,
the others fled wildly for their lives.

14 Some sought caves,
others went to mountain streams
and sources of rivers;
some were traumatised to death.

15 Those who were expert archers and heroes
bravely tried to flush out
the Dānava anti-gods
from their hiding-place

16 But could not succeed,
for the anti-gods
were in the remote depths of the ocean;
so they returned disappointed.

17 O lord of men!
When they saw the universe disintegrating,
and yajñas and religious rituals being desecrated,
despair overcame the gods.

18 They met under the guidance of Mahendra-Indra
and freely spoke their minds.
They sought
radiant Deva Nārāyaṇa's protection.

19 They approached
the invincible lord of Vaikuṇṭha
and, namaskāring the slayer of Madhu,
they said:

20 "Lord!
Creator!
Sustainer!
Destroyer of the universe!
Sole Initiator of the moving
And unmoving life of the world's creatures!

21 Lotus-eyed Divinity!
You who in the past
In the form of a boar
Raised the earth sunk in the ocean
And saved the world's creatures!

22 Puruṣottama!
You as Narasiṁha,
The Man-Lion Deity,
Killed the mahā-valiant ancient anti-god Hiraṇyakaśipu
In the distant past.

23 There was the mahā antigod Bali
Whom none could kill.
In the form of a dwarf, Vāmana,
You exiled Bali from the three worlds.

24 You killed the vicious anti-god Jambha
Who was an expert archer
And skilled in the despoiling of yajñas.

25 Who can count your feats,
O slayer-of-Madhu, Madhusūdana?
You are the refuge
Of all whom fear oppresses.

26 O God of the god-of-gods!
We seek your help!
Save the worlds,
Save Śakra-Indra and the gods
From the fearful impending doom."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THREE

1 "It is through your grace
That the four kinds of creatures prosper,"
Continued the gods.
"They propitiate us with *havya*-offerings
And the *pitṛs* with *kavya*-offerings.

2 Guarded by you,
Free from harassments,
People help each other
And prosper through your grace.

3 And now they are all terror-stricken.
They do not know
Who kills the Brahmins at night.

4 If the Brahmins are all killed,
The world will be destroyed.
If the world is destroyed,
Heaven too will be no more.

5 O mahā-muscled lord of the worlds!
Be gracious to the people
Who live under your protection.
Grant them your grace."

6 "I know the reason," Viṣṇu replied,
"why this killing goes on.
I will tell you about it.
Be calm and listen.

7 The Kāleyas
are the fiercest of the anti-gods.
Led by Vṛtra,
they tried to ruin the universe.

8 When Vṛtra was killed
by wise thousand-eyed Indra,
they fled to the ocean of Varuṇa
to save their lives.

9 From the shark-and-crocodile-infested ocean,
they venture out at night
and slaughter the ṛṣis with the aim
of destroying all life.

10 Since they take refuge in the ocean,
they cannot be killed.
Find out a means by which the ocean
can be dried up.

11 And who but Agastya has the śakti
to dry up the ocean?
There is no other way of exterminating
these anti-gods."

12 Encouraged by Viṣṇu's advice,
the gods went to Parameṣṭhin-Brahmā
and took his permission
to visit Agastya's āśrama.

13 They saw Varuṇa's son,
the mahātmā ṛṣi Agastya
attended by other ṛṣis, like Pitāmaha Brahmā
attended by the gods.

14 The gods approached the mahātmā,
incorruptible son of Mitra and Varuṇa,
as he sat in his āśrama,
and they chanted his glories.

15 "Nahuṣa oppressed creatures –
And you gave them shelter, in the distant past.
For the welfare of the worlds,
Nahuṣa was cast out of heaven.

16 Once, furious with the Sun,
The Vindhya mountains began swelling;
But they had to stop,
In obedience to your command.

17 When darkness covered the world,
And death threatened all creatures,
You were their protector,
You saved their life.

18 O Bhagavan, revered one,
When calamity befalls us,
We seek your shelter,
Knowing you will not refuse."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FOUR

1 "O mahā-muni, what I would like to know,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"is why the anger-blinded Vindhya mountains
suddenly started swelling."

2 Between sunrise and sunset
(Lomaśa said),
the Sun circumambulated in *pradakṣiṇa*
the golden rājā of mountains, Meru.

3 The Vindhya range, seeing this,
said to the Sun,
"Every day you circumambulate Meru
and honour him;

4 Why don't you honour me too, O Sun?"
The Sun,
addressed in this direct manner,
replied to the-Indra-of-mountains Vindhya:

5 "I do not do this out of my own willing,
O Mountain:
The Creator of this universe has patterned a path
for me."

6 O foe-smiting Yudhiṣṭhira! The angry Mountain,
to obstruct the path of the Sun,
suddenly began swelling
to enormous size.

7 The gods rushed to Vindhya,
the mahā-mountain-rājā,
trying their best to dissuade him.
He would not listen.

8 So the congregation of gods
went to the foremost
of men of dharma, the ṛṣi Agastya,
and told him what happened.

9 "Vindhya, rājā of mountains,"
said the gods,
"is angrily obstructing
the sun, moon, and stars.

10 Finest of Brahmins, O mahā-fortune-favoured one!
There is none but you
who can dissuade him
from his resolve."

11 Acting on the plea of the gods,
the Brahmin Agastya and his wife
went to the Mountain,
and said:

12 "Finest of mountains,
allow me passage to the south,
where I have an urgent task
to fulfill.

13 And wait until I return
before you close the passage;
after I return, O Indra-among-mountains,
you may swell as you please."

14 Making this agreement with Vindhya,
Agastya went away;
and to this day he has not returned
from the south.

15 This is the answer to your question
why the Vindhya
began suddenly swelling
and why it is normal now.

16 Now let me tell you, O rājā,
how the Kāleyas were destroyed by the gods
when their plea had been answered
by Agastya.

17 Listening to the gods, Mitra-Varuṇa's son
Agastya said, "What brings you here?
What do you want?"
And the gods replied to the muni,
after doing *prāñjali*
and placing Puraṁdara-Indra in front:

18 "O mahātmā ṛṣi,
do this for us –
drink up the ocean,
so we can freely kill
the foes of the gods,
the Kāleya hordes."

19 The muni replied to the gods,
"So let it be.
I will grant your desire
and bring mahā-benefit to the world."

20 Saying this, he hurried to the Ocean,
the lord of rivers,
accompanied by the gods
and tapasyā-perfected ṛṣis.

21 Men, Nāgas, gandharvas,
yakṣas, Kinnaras
followed the mahatma ṛṣi
to witness that marvellous feat.

22 They came to the roar-reverberating ocean
whose waves
seemed to be dancing
in the tremendous wind,

23 And laughing with rows of foam-teeth
glistening.
Sharks and various other water-beasts
could be seen.

24 The gods, gandharvas, Nāgas,
and mahā-fortune-favoured ṛṣis –
all accompanied Agastya
to the mahā-ocean.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIVE

1 At the shore of the ocean,
the bhagavān ṛṣi Agastya said
to the gods and ṛṣis who had accompanied him
(Lomaśa continued):

2 "Yes, I will drink Varuṇa's ocean dry
for the good of the world.
Start making preparations
for whatever plans you have."

3 No sooner had he said this
than the undefeatable son of Mitra-Varuṇa
began furiously drinking up the ocean
in everyone's presence.

4 Seeing the ocean slowly drying,
Indra and the gods were wonderstruck;
and they chanted
Agastya's pūjā-praises:

5 "Redeemer of the world,
Creator of the world –
Our saviour!
Your grace will save the world
And the gods from destruction."

6 And as the gods offered pūjā
and celestial flowers fell,
and gandharvas sang songs,
the mahātmā ṛṣi Agastya
fulfilled his promise
of drinking the ocean dry.

7 When they saw the mahā-ocean dry,
the gods rejoiced;
picking up their weapons,
they mustered courage
and began attacking
the hordes of anti-gods.

8 Attacked by the roaring,
mahā-muscled, swift-rushing
mahātmās of heaven,
the anti-gods retreated,
unable to withstand
the ferocious onslaught.

9 The Dānava anti-gods tried weakly
at first to fight back;
they roared and tried
to rally their forces.

10 But their energies had been sapped
by the strength of the tapasyā
of the ṛṣis they had killed,
and the gods routed them.

11 Lying there dead with golden ornaments
and dazzling ear-rings,
the anti-gods looked like fallen flowers
of a flame-of-the-forest.

12 O finest of men!
The Kāleyas who escaped
ripped open the goddess earth,
and fled to the realm of Pātāla.

13 The gods,
rejoicing at the rout of the Dānava anti-gods,
sang praises in honour
of the bull-brave muni Agastya;

14 "O mahā-fortune-blessed one!
Through your grace the world
Has rediscovered mahā-happiness,
The cruel Kaleyas have been destroyed
By your prowess.

15 O mahā-muscled hero,
Saviour of the world,
Return the waters you have drunk
And make the ocean full again."

16 The bull-brave muni said
to Puraṁdara-Indra and the other gods:
"I have digested
all the water.

17 Find some other means
of filling up the ocean."
When they heard these words
of the pure-ātmaned mahā-ṛṣi,

18 The gods were filled with wonder
and anxiety.
Together they praṇāma-ed
the bull-brave muni,

19 And returned to their abodes.
The gods,
led by Viṣṇu,
went to Brahmā Pitāmaha.

20 They repeatedly consulted each other
for suggestions,
and followed Viṣṇu to Brahmā,
before whom they did *añjali*
with folded palms
asking how to re-fill the ocean.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIX

1 Brahmā Pitāmaha, Grandfather of Creation,
said to the gods,
"Go on with whatever work
you were doing.

2 A very long time must elapse
before the ocean gets re-filled.
Mahārāja Bhagīratha's relatives
will be the cause."

3 They listened to the words
of Brahmā Pitāmaha,
and went about their duties,
waiting for the promised time.

4 Yudhiṣṭhira asked, "Why and how,
O Brahmin,
were the relatives of Bhagīratha involved?
How was the ocean filled?

5 O tapasyā-rich Brahmin,
I would like to hear from you
the excellent history of rājā Bhagīratha
in detail."

6 Addressed by mahā-ātmaned Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
the Indra-among-Brahmins Lomaśa
narrated the mahā-glorious story
of mahā-ātmaned Sagara.

7 In Ikṣvāku's race was born
a king called Sagara,
incomparably handsome and heroic.
But he was son-less.

8 He had exterminated the Haihayas
and Tālajaṅghas,
subdued many rājās,
and ruled his kingdom unchallenged.

9 O bull-brave Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira! He had two wives,
both conscious of their youth and beauty –
one a princess of Vidarbha,
the other a princess of Śibi.

10 Hoping to get a son, that Indra-among-rājās
went with his wives
to Mount Kailāsa,
and practised mahā tapasyā there.

11 In deep meditation
induced by tapasyā and yoga,
he saw the radiant three-eyed god,
the slayer of Tripura –

12 Saṅkara!
Bhava!
Iśāna!
The Trident-Wielder! Śūlapāṇī! Pinākin!
Tryambaka!
Multi-formed Ugreśa!
Śiva, husband of Umā!

13 Immediately on seeing the Boon-Giver,
the mahā-muscled king,
with his two wives,
praṇāmaed and prayed for a son.

14 Hara-Śiva, pleased, said to the excellent king
and his two wives:
"Taking into account the auspicious time
of your asking,

15 O finest of men,
sixty thousand heroic and confident sons
will be born
to one of your two wives.

16 They are all doomed to die.
Your other wife
will bear you a son
who will perpetuate your race."

17 With these words, Rudra-Śiva disappeared.
Rājā Sagara
also returned to his palace
with his wives.

18 The presence of his wives
made the excellent king happy,
as he was returning to his kingdom.
His lotus-eyed wives,

19 Queens Vaidarbhī and Śaibyā,
both conceived.
In due time, queen Vaidarbhī
gave birth to a gourd.

20 Queen Śaibyā gave birth
to a god-like son.
The king thought of getting rid
of the gourd,

21 But he heard a solemn sky-voice intone:
"O rājā,
do not act in haste.
Do not get rid of your sons,

22 Remove the seeds from the gourd
and place them carefully
in heated pots,
partly filled with ghee.

23 In this way, O king, lord of men,
you will get sixty thousand sons.
Be firm,
and concentrate your mind on this.
Mahādeva-Śiva has willed it
to be so."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVEN

1 The excellent rājā (continued Lomaśa)
faithfully followed the instructions
of the voice in the sky,
O bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira,

2 He separated all the seeds,
and placed each of them
in a separate pot,
partly filled with ghee.

3 Anxious for the welfare of his sons,
he appointed one nurse
to look after each vessel.
After a long time were born

4 Sixty thousand radiantly-powerful sons.
They were born
to the rāja-ṛṣi Sagara
through the grace of Rudra-Śiva.

5 They were aggressive, ill-minded,
able to roam the sky at will.
They started harassing creatures,
including the gods.

6 Those bellicose sons of Sagara
began attacking
gods and gandharvas and rākṣasas
and other creatures.

7 The depredations of Sagara's sons
forced the world's creatures,
led by the gods,
to seek Brahmā's protection.

8 Mahā-fortune-favoured Brahmā, Pitāmahā of creatures,
said to them:
"Gods, return with these creatures
to your abodes,

9 For the mahā destruction of Sagara's sons
will soon take place
as a result of their excesses –
a mahā terrifying massacre."

10 O lord of men! The gods and others
listened attentively to Brahmā,
the Pitāmaha of all creatures,
and returned to their abodes.

11 O bull-brave Bharata! A long time passed.
The valiant rājā Sagara
started making preparations
for a Horse-Sacrifice.

12 The ritual horse,
under the protection of his sons,
roamed all over the world.
Near the dry ocean-bed,

13 It disappeared without a trace,
though carefully guarded.
Tāta, child, the sons thought
the excellent horse had been stolen.

14 They returned to their father,
saying the horse had disappeared,
most probably stolen.
"Search for him everywhere,"

15 Ordered the king. Commanded by their father,
they fanned out in all directions
in an attempt
to find the horse.

16 The sons of Sagara,
despite their best efforts,
were unable to trace the vanished,
probably stolen, horse.

17 So they went back to their father,
and doing *añjali* before him,
said, "We have searched the seas,
islands, rivers, caves,

18 The hills and the forests,
O great king,
ruler of the earth,
protector of all creatures,

19 And we have failed to find
the horse or its thief."
When the rājā heard this,
he lost his temper.

20 Impelled as if by fate,
the king said to them,
"Go! – and search for the horse
in all directions,

21 And do not come back
without the yajña-horse."
Once again, obedient to their father's command,
Sagara's sons

22 Began a world-wide hunt
for the sacrificial horse.
The heroes came across a large pit
on the earth's surface,

23 And assiduously, with spades and pickaxes,
they began excavating it,
till their efforts
touched the ocean itself.

24 Varuṇa's abode, the ocean,
dug into by the efforts
of Sagara's sons,
found itself in great distress.

25 Encroached upon and wounded
by Sagara's sons,
the Nāgas, rākṣasas and anti-gods
began howling in pain.

26 Hundreds and thousands of bodies
could be seen lying
headless or trunkless,
their skin and bones fearfully mutilated.

27 Sagara's sons continued digging
into Varuṇa's abode,
but even after a long passage of time,
the horse could not be found.

28 Frustrated, Sagara's sons ventured
to the north-eastern parts,
and started digging
till they reached Pātāla.

29 There they saw the horse
galloping about freely;
they also saw the mahā-ātmaned radiant ṛṣi Kapila,
like a lustrous flame.

30 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
Seeing him and the horse, they rejoiced.
Kala impelled them, so they ignored the presence
of mahā-ātmaned Kapila.

31 They ran eagerly towards the horse.
Mahārāja,
this made the foremost of munis Kapila
furious.

32 The bull-brave muni Kapila,
also called Vāsudeva,
blazed forth, and shoots of flame
issued from his eyes.

33 The radiant ṛṣi reduced to ashes
the foolish sons of Sagara.
Watching them burnt away,
the ṛṣi Narada of mahā-tapasyā

34 Went to Sagara and told him
what had happened.
Hearing the horrible news
from Nārada's lips, Sagara

35 Seemed to take leave of his senses;
then he composed himself,
recalled Sthāṇu-Śiva's words,
and decided to go

36 Personally to find the yajña-horse;
he summoned
his grandson Aṁśumān
(the son of Asamañjas),

37 And said to him: "Child, *tāta*,
my sixty thousand
incalculably powerful sons,
by the anger of Kapila,

38 Have perished; the fault is mine too.
Faultless one,
I have forsaken your father too
in order to save dharma."

39 "O tapasyā-rich ṛṣi," asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
"why did tiger-among-rājās Sagara
forsake his own son –
a son heroic and undeserving desertion?"

40 Sagara's son by Śaibyā (said Lomaśa)
was named Asamañjas.
He was notorious
for seizing by the throat

41 The frail children of citizens
while they played,
and hurling them in the river.
The citizens organised

42 A meeting and,
doing *añjali* before Sagara, they said:
"Mahārāja, you guard us
from hostile attackers;

43 You should also protect us
from an enemy within – Asamañjas your son."
Hearing the accusation of the citizens,
Sagara

44 Was briefly nonplussed,
but he said to his ministers,
"Drive out my son Asamañjas
from the city.

45 If you wish to please me,
have this done soon."
O ruler-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira, ordered by the king,
the ministers

46 Quickly did as advised.
This is the story
of how the son of Sagara
was exiled by his mahātmā father

47 For the welfare of the citizens.
Let me now tell you
what Sagara told
the great bowman Aṁśumān. Listen.

48 "My son, I am painted by the rejection
of your father," Sagara said,
"the deaths of my sons,
and the disappearance of the horse.

49 I am stricken with deep grief
when I think
of the obstruction to the yajña.
O my grandson, you must find the horse."

50 At mahātmā Sagara's request (continued Lomaśa),
Aṁśumān sadly went to the spot
where the massive excavation
had been done.

51 He used that tunnel as a means
of entering the ocean;
and he too saw the horse
and mahātmā Kapila.

52 Seeing the effulgently radiant ancient ṛṣi,
he *praṇāmaed* by lowering his head
and explained the reason
for his coming.

53 O mahārāja! O Bharata descendant,
Dharmātmā Kapila was pleased with Aṁśumān,
and asked him to name any boon
that he desired.

54 He first asked for the horse
needed for the yajña,
and next that his *pitṛ*-uncles
be purified.

55 Mahā-effulgent Kapila,
bull-brave muni, said:
"Faultless one, may you prosper!
I grant your wishes.

56 You possess fortitude, truth, and dharma.
You have fulfilled Sagara's desires,
your father is blessed
with a true son.

57 Because of you,
Sagara's sons will attain heaven,
and your grandson will bring
the triple-flowing river Gaṅgā

58 From heaven by propitiating Maheśvara-Śiva
while expiating for Sagara's sons.
May you prosper, O bull-brave hero!
Take the horse back,

59 *Tāta,* my child, and complete the Aśvamedha
of mahā-ātmaned Sagara."
Aṁśumān took the horse
as instructed by mahā-ātmaned Kapila,

60 And brought it to the yajña enclosure
of Sagara;
he took the dust of the feet
of mahātmā Sagara,

61 Who smelt his head,
and narrated to Sagara
all that he had seen and heard,
including the deaths of Sagara's sons.

62 He informed Sagara
about the return of the horse.
When the yajña was completed,
the gods greeted Sagara.

63 Lotus-eyed Sagara adopted the Ocean,
Varuṇa's abode,
as one of his sons, and ruled his kingdom
for a long time.

64 Handing over his kingdom
to his grandson Aṁśumān,
he went to heaven;
and the dharmātmā Aṁśumān,

65 Following his grandfather's example,
ruled over the sea-girdled earth.
Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
his son was the dharma-rich Dilīpa.

66 Aṁśumān handed over the kingdom to Dilīpa,
and died.
Learning about the terrible fate
of his ancestors, Dilīpa

67 Was grief-stricken
and decided to expiate for them.
He made every effort
to bring down the Gaṅgā,

68 But try however hard he would,
he could not succeed.
A handsome, full-of-dharma son
was born to him;

69 A son given to truth,
without any ill motives;
he was named Bhagīratha.
Crowning him, Dilīpa retired to the forest.

70 O Bharata descendant,
after the successful completion of tapasyā,
Rājā Dilīpa left the forest
and found repose in heaven.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHT

1 Rājā Bhagīratha,
an excellent bowman and mahā-chariot-warrior,
delighted the eyes and hearts
of all men.

2 This mahā-muscled hero
had learnt from mahātmā Kapila
how his ancestors had died
and were unable to attain heaven.

3 Sorrowfully he entrusted the royal duties
to his ministers,
and went to the Himālayas
to practise tapasyā.

4 O finest of men! Tapasyā cleansed him
of all defects, and he climbed
the highest peaks of the Himālayas
to worship the Gaṅgā.

5 He saw the peaks
rich with mineral wealth,
lightly drenched with rain
that fell from floating clouds.

6 He saw their rivers, forested slopes,
rocky caves, and palaces,
and living in them their citizens –
the lions and tigers.

7 All species of birds flew there,
chirping differently –
the fork-tailed shrike, *haṁsas,*
dātyuhas, water-cocks,

8 Peacocks, hundred-feathered birds,
rock partridge,
kokilas, black-rimmed *cakoras,*
and birds always fond of their young.

9 Lotuses bloomed there
in exquisite stretches of water,
where the sweet-shrill screams
of *sārasā*-cranes could be heard.

10 On stone slabs sat Kinnaras and apsarās;
elephants came
and rubbed their trunks
against the tall trees.

11 Vidyādharas visited those places;
gems were hidden there;
fiery-tongued, deadly-piosonous snakes
lived there,

12 Looking like coiled heaps of collyrium.
This is how Himavant looked
to the excellent king
when he arrived.

13 He practised intense tapasyā,
living on fruits, roots and water.
A thousand god-years
passed in this way,

14 And then the mahā-river Gaṅgā
herself appeared
and gave darshan to the king
in her embodied form. She said:

15 "Mahārāja! Best of men,
what is your wish?
What would you like from me?
Ask, and I shall give it."

16 The rājā, addressed by Gaṅgā,
said to the daughter of Himavant,
after doing *añjalī* before her,
and offering her *praṇāmas,*
"O mahā-nadī,
boon-granting river,

17 Kapila despatched my grandfather
to the abode of Yama.
The sixty thousand sons
of radiant Sagara

18 Were reduced to instant ashes by Kapila.
O Mahā-River,
because they perished in this way,
they failed to attain heaven.

19 So long as their bodies do not receive
the grace of your water,
there will be no peace
for Sagara's sons.

20 O mahā-fortune-favoured queen of rivers!
All I ask is:
take my ancestors, Sagara's sons,
to heaven."

21 World-namaskara-ed Gaṅgā listened
to rājā Bhagīratha,
and with a happy heart
said to the king:

22 "Mahārāja, I will certainly do as you say.
But when I fall from the sky,
the impact
will be calamitous.

23 There is none in the three worlds
except Maheśvara-Śiva,
Blue-Throated Nīlakaṇṭha Śiva,
who can survive the impact.

24 Go therefore, O mahā-muscled one,
and please boon-bestowing Hara-Śiva
with your tapasyā.
He will break my fall.

25 He will grant your wish
for the welfare of your *pitṛs*;
your tapasyā will move him."
Mahārāja Bhagīratha

26 Went to Kailasa mountain
and propitiated Śaṅkara-Śiva.
After a certain period
during which Bhagīratha practised severe tapasyā

27 With the idea of attaining heaven
for his *pitṛs*,
Śiva promised that he would receive Gaṅgā
on his head.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHT

1 Bhagavān Śiva,
listening to Bhagīratha's request
decided to please the heaven-dwellers
and said, "So be it.

2 For your sake, O mahā-muscled finest of kings,
I will receive on my head
pure, blessed Gaṅgā
as she falls from the sky."

3 Saying this, he arrived in the Himālayas
surrounded by his ferocious followers,
all brandishing
various uplifted weapons.

4 He said to the finest of kings Bhagīratha,
"O mahā-muscled hero,
pray to the river,
daughter of the king of mountains,

5 And I will absorb the impact
of her descent."
Rājā Bhagīratha heard Śarva-Śiva say this,
and he began

6 To meditate on the Gaṅgā
with a serene mind
and with head bowed.
Gaṅgā, river of holy waters,

7 Saw Īśāna-Śiva standing ready,
and suddenly fell from heaven.
The gods and mahā-ṛṣis,
watching her descent,

8 Came, with gandharvas, Nāgas, and yakṣas,
to witness the event.
Gaṅgā, daughter of Himavant,
plummeted from the sky

9 In a watery welter
of fish, crocodiles, and fierce whirlpools.
O rājā, Hara-Śiva received on his head
the lady who girdles the sky;

10 Rushing down his forehead,
she looked like a garland of pearls.
O rājā! Śiva's ocean-going wife
split into three serpentine streams;

11 Her frothing waters
Flapping like *haṁsas*
Turning stumbling rushing
In tortuous abandon

12 Meandering like a drunken girl
Wearing a dress of transparent foam
At times roaring and
At other times whispering

13 In various forms and
In various moods reaching
The earth where she turned
To Bhagīratha and said:

14 "Mahārāja!
Where shall I go?
Tell me, O lord of the earth.
I have come on earth for your sake."

15 Rājā Bhagīratha heard her
and went to the spot
where the bodies of Sagara's mahā-ātmaned sons
lay,

16 In order that she may flood the place
with her sacred water.
Hara-Śiva, the world-namaskāra-ed deity,
receiving

17 Gaṅgā in his matted locks,
went to the finest-of-mountains Kailāsa
with the gods. Coming to the ocean
with Gaṅgā, the king

18 Re-filled the ocean, Varuna's abode,
with a great gush of waters.
He adopted the river Gaṅgā
as his daughter,

19 And offered oblations to the *pitṛs*
because his wishes had been fulfilled.
This is how
three-stream-flowing Gaṅgā

20 Descended on earth
so that the ocean may be filled,
this is how mahātmā Agastya
drank up the ocean,

21 And this is how, mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
the anti-god Vātāpi
was destroyed by Agastya.
This is the story you asked to hear.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TEN

1 O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya!
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
Kuntī's son came to the fear-removing rivers
Nandā and Aparanandā.

2 He went to the salubrious hill
Hemakūṭa,
and saw there the most inconceivable,
the most wondrous sights.

3 Without the wind's help,
clouds rained showers there;
thousands of stones rolled down,
blocking the ascent of people.

4 Strong winds blew there daily,
and the gods sent rain.
One could hear the chant of holy songs,
but see no singers.

5 Morning and evening one saw there
the sacred libation-carrying Havyavāhana-Agni;
swarms of bees stung devotees,
obstructing their tapasyā.

6 Men fell sick,
and melancholia overpowered them.
Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira asked Lomaśa
about these strange happenings.

7 "Mahā-refulgent ṛṣi," Yudhiṣṭhira asked,
"what is the secret, *bhagavan,* revered one,
behind these supernatural happenings
on this holy hill?"

8 Let me tell you, foe-chastiser rājā
(Lomaśa said),
all that I have heard about these phenomena.
Listen carefully.

9 On Ṛṣabha hill here once lived
for hundreds of years
a ṛṣi of marvellous tapasyā
whose name was Ṛṣabha.

10 Because the hubbub of visitors
interrupted his tapasyā,
he said to the hill,
"Throw stones on all who talk here,

11 And let the winds blow loudly,
suppressing the babble of visitors here;
let roaring clouds
make their chatter inaudible."

12 O rājā! This is what the maharṣi ordered –
some deeds he accomplished
out of anger,
others he expressly prohibited.

13 O rājā! It is said that when in the past
the gods visited Nandā,
human beings approached them
to have their darshan.

14 Śakra-Indra and the gods
preferred not to be seen,
and so made this place inaccessible
by creating a circle of hills.

15 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira, it is difficult
even to look at these hills,
let alone the thought
of climbing them.

16 And no person can ascend
this mahā-mountain
unless he has practised severe tapasyā.
So, take the Vow of Silence.

17 Here, O descendant of Bharata,
the gods performed yajñas
whose signs can be seen clearly
even to this day.

18 The grass here is all sacred *kuśa* –
the entire slope is *kuśa*-grassed.
The trees here
look like so many yajña-poles.

19 Gods and ṛṣis dwell on this hill,
and can be seen, morning and evening,
feeding libations
to the sacred fire Havyavāhana.

20 Bathing here means the complete cleansing
of one's crimes.
So perform your ablutions here
with your younger brothers.

21 Take a dip in the Nandā,
and proceed to Kauśikī
where Viśvāmitra performed
his incomparable tapasyā.

22 He and his followers washed themselves
and proceeded
to the sacred, cool, enchanting *tīrtha*
called Kauśikī.

23 O bull-brave Bharata,
this is the sacred, divine river Kauśikī;
on its banks the beautiful āśrama
of Viśvāmitra can be seen.

24 This is the āśrama
of mahātmā Kaśyapa,
whose son was the senses-subdued ṛṣi
Ṛṣyaśṛṅga.

25 His tapasyā compelled Vāsava-Indra to send rain;
fear of him
made the slayer of Vṛtra and Bala
send rain during a drought.

26 He was born of a hind;
he was the son of Kaśyapa's son Vibhāṇḍaka;
he did something wonderful
in Lomapāda's kingdom.

27 When the crops were in full harvest,
king Lomapāda bestowed
his daughter Śāntā on Ṛṣyaśṛṅga,
as Savitā the Sun bestowed Sāvitrī on Brahmā.

28 "How did Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, the son of Kaśyapa,
come to be born of a hind?"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira.
"And, born of unnatural intercourse,
how did he happen to become
a man of such tapasyā?

29 And how was it that Śakra-Indra,
slayer of Vṛtra and Bala,
feared the learned boy so much
as to send rain during drought?

30 And indeed, what kind of a lovely princess
was vow-observing Śāntā
that she should tempt a ṛṣi's heart –
a ṛṣi who had the form of a deer?

31 And why did foe-chastising Pākaśāsana-Indra
refuse to send rain
to the kingdom
of dharma-rich Lompāda?

32 *Bhagavan,* revered one,
answer these for me in detail –
everything about Ṛṣyaśṛṅga's life
exactly as it happened."

33 How the illustrious Ṛṣyaśṛṅga
was born as son
to the Brahmin Vibhāṇḍaka
who was glorious like Prajāpati,

34 Who had controlled his passions –
that I will now tell you (said Lomaśa).
Even when still a boy,
Ṛṣyaśṛṅga was honoured by old men.

35 Kaśyapa's god-like son Vibhāṇḍaka
practised tapasyā beside a mahā-lake.
As time passed,
the ṛṣi began to feel tired.

36 O rājā! One day, while he was bathing,
he saw the apsarā Urvaśī,
and his semen gushed out.
A hind lapped it up –

37 For she was thirsty – along with the water.
She conceived.
She had been promised
by Bhagavān Brahmā the World-Creator –

38 She was previously a goddess's daughter –
that she would be freed of her hind-form
if she gave birth to a ṛṣi.
True to promise,

39 Vibhāṇḍaka's son mahā-ṛṣi Ṛṣyaśṛṅga
was born to that hind:
and he devoted himself to severe tapasyā
in the forest.

40 O rājā! In the middle of his forehead
there was a horn,
which is why that mahā-ātmaned ṛṣi
was Ṛṣyaśṛṅga or the Deer-Horned.

41 O king! He saw no person
other than his father,
and so his mind could concentrate itself
fully on brahmacarya.

42 At that time there was a king of Aṅga,
a loved-and loving *sakhā* friend
of Daśaratha,
whose name was Lomapāda.

43 It is said that he maliciously lied
to a Brahmin,
with the result that all Brahmins
decided to shun him.

44 Without a purohita, that rājā started
on dissolute ways;
thousand-eyed Sahasrākṣa-Indra withheld rain
from his kingdom; his subjects suffered.

45 He asked intelligent,
competent-in-tapasyā Brahmins
how Surendra-Indra could be induced
to send down rain.

46 "O wise ones! Find out a means
of making the clouds send rain."
The intelligent assembly met,
each giving his own informed opinion.

47 One great Brahmin muni among them said,
"O Indra-among-rājās,
the Brahmins are angry with you.
Appease them first.

48 Send for the muni's son Ṛṣyaśṛṅga
who is innocent of women,
who lives in the forest
and is a model of austerity.

49 If that man of mahā-tapasyā
can be persuaded
to come to your kingdom,
the clouds will pour down rain."

50 O rājā! King Lomapāda listened carefully and,
deciding to expiate for his wrongs,
went and assured thus the Brahmins,
and returned.

51 His subjects rejoiced
when they heard of this.
Then the ruler of Aṅga
summoned all his expert ministers

52 To advise him on how to bring Ṛṣyaśṛṅga.
Finally,
he was able to find a means,
after consulting his ministers

53 Who were learned in the śāstras,
proficient in artha,
and eminently practical.
The king arranged to have some courtesans,

54 Expert in all arts, brought before him,
and he said:
"Go, find out a way of bringing
ṛṣi Ṛṣyaśṛṅga

55 To my kingdom.
Lovely ones, tempt him, win his trust."
The women, fearing the king
and the ṛṣi's curse,

56 Paled and, trembling,
said it could not be done.
One of them, however, an older woman,
said to the rājā:

57 "Mahārāja, I will bring
the rich-in-tapasyā ṛṣi here.
But you must get me some things
I will need.

58 If I have them, I will be able to seduce
the ṛṣi's son to come here."
The king ordered
all she wanted brought.

59 He gave her money,
gems and ornaments of all kinds.
Taking some lovely girls with her,
she went to the forest.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED ELEVEN

1 She ordered a floating āśrama
to be constructed
as part of her plan,
and because the rājā had sanctioned it.

2 Surrounding that āśrama
were artificial plants and flowering creepers
and many trees
with delicious fruits.

3 The floating āśrama
was a remarkable example
of almost magical architecture,
enchantingly and irresistibly lovely.

4 She moored the āśrama-boat
near the āśrama of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga
and sent men-scouts
to survey the place.

5 According to a pre-arranged plan,
she sent her daughter,
an accomplished courtesan,
to Kaśyapa's son.

6 The confident girl approached
the meditating ascetic, the ṛṣi's son,
as he sat absorbed
inside the āśrama.

7 "O muni," she asked, "is all well
with the tapasyā here?
Are roots and fruits plentiful?
I hope that you find
this āśrama pleasing.
I have come on a visit.

8 Are the merits of tapasyā
increasing day by day?
Is your father still radiant
with holiness, and pleased
with you? O Ṛṣyaśṛṅga,
are your studies progressing?"

9 "You are lustrous like light,"
Ṛṣyaśṛṅga said. "I must
pay you my homage, and offer
you water to wash your feet,
and roots and fruits
as enjoined in my dharma.

10 Please sit on this mat
of *kuśa*-grass covered
with black deer-skin
and excellently comfortable.
Where is your āśrama?
What vow are you observing?"

11 “Three *yojanas* from here,
on the hill’s other side, Kāśyapa’s son,
is my āśrama,” she replied.
“My dharma forbids acceptance
of obeisance, and washing
of feet with water.

12 It is not I, O Brahmin,
who deserves obeisance, but you.
My vow is simple –
you must embrace me.”

13 Ṛṣyaśṛṅga replied:
“I have ripe fruits like gall-nuts,
karūśaka, iṅguda-nuts,
dhanvana and *pippala*-figs.
I give them to you.
Eat them at your pleasure.”

14 She threw aside the fruits,
and offered him instead
mahā-delicious
and lovely-looking food,
which Ṛṣyaśṛṅga eagerly
took from her hands.

15 She offered him garlands
exquisitely scented,
and clothes of dazzling colours;
she gave him heady wine,
she played with him, laughed
with him, enjoying herself.

16 Like an arching creeper swaying
under a load of fruit,
she played with a ball.
She touched his body with hers,
again and again
she embraced him passionately.

17 She bent and snapped
the flower from the *sarja,*
the aśoka and *tilaka*;
she glanced at him coyly,
attempting to seduce
the mahā-ṛṣi’s enraptured son.

18 Seeing him weaken,
she kept pressing against him
again and again.
She walked away slowly,
as if to make oblations
to the sacred fire.

19 Her departure left Ṛṣyaśṛṅga
bewildered and aroused.
He thought only of her.
He felt empty inside.
He sighed again and again,
as if in great pain.

20 Tawny-eyed Vibhāṇḍaka,
with his hair-covered body,
Kaśyapa's son Vibhāṇḍaka,
engaged in deep studies,
pure of heart and mind,
happened to pass by.

21 He saw his son dejected,
alone and abstracted,
looking up vacantly,
sighing repeatedly.
Approaching his son,
Vibhāṇḍaka said:

22 "Where are the logs, child, *tāta*,
for the yajña-fire?
Is the *agnihotṛ* done?
Are the yajña-ladles polished,
and the spoons? Are the cow
and the calf ready for the yajña?

23 What is wrong with you, son?
You look forlorn and lost.
Your mind is dejected.
What is the matter?
What happened today? Tell me.
Who passed by this way?"

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWELVE

1 "I saw a brahmacārī,"
replied Ṛṣyaśṛṅga,
"with thick hair;
not too short nor too tall;
gold-skinned and lotus-eyed,
radiant like a god.

2 He blazed like the sun,
his eyes were black and lovely,
his beauty enchanting;
his blue-black braids
were fragrant and tied
with gold-coloured ribbons.

3 Round his neck an ornament
dazzled like lightning
streaking through the sky;
on his chest I saw
two hairless and fleshy
lovely-looking balls.

4 Slim was his waist,
and smooth around the navel,
rounded his hips;
from under his dress
dangled a golden string
like the waist-string I wear.

5 On his feet he wore something
that jingled as he walked
and was lovely to look at;
on his wrists there were things
that also jingled;
they looked like this rosary.

6 And when he walked,
those ornaments undulated sweetly
like joyous swans in a lake;
as for his clothes,
they were so glorious!
Mine are not as lovely.

7 So charming his face,
so musical his voice!
The lilt of his speech
was the song of the kokila:
I heard it and felt it
in my heart of heart.

8 *Tāta*! Like the forest in spring
blossoming into beauty
when fanned by breezes,
he, fragrant and lovely,
blossomed into beauty
when touched by the breeze.

9 His hair was a pile
of black mass on his head,
divided neatly in two;
his ears were surrounded
it seems by two beautiful,
indescribable *cakravākas.*

10 In his right hand a fruit,
a lovely round fruit!
He tossed it to the sky,
and it fell on the ground,
and he tossed it again,
and it fell down again.

11 He hit on it hard,
and swung himself round,
like a wind-whirled tree.
Tāta! Dear father, I saw him,
he looked like a god.
I was so happy!

12 He caught hold of my body,
he gripped me by my hair,
and he bent down on my face –
he put his mouth to mine,
and gave out such a moan
that I shook with pleasure.

13 He put aside the water
I gave him for his feet,
he rejected my fruit-gifts.
He said that was his custom,
and in return he offered
his own fruits to me.

14 I tasted those fruits.
They taste so much better
than the fruits we eat.
They had no rind in them,
they had no stone in them,
as our fruits have.

15 The lovely-featured guest
gave me water to drink –
sweet-scented water!
I drank it and was happy,
I felt the ground moving
from under my feet.

16 These are the garlands,
threaded with silk:
they belong to him.
Blazing with tapasyā,
he scattered them here,
and went to his āśrama.

17 When he left I was lonely,
my body seemed to burn,
my mind filled with sadness.
I want to see him
as soon as I can.
I want him to be here.

18 *Tāta!* This very moment
I will go to him.
What is the brahmacarya
and tapasyā practised by him?
I will practise that ārya-dharma too,
and live as he does.

19 I yearn to practise
all that he practises.
I yearn to see him again."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTEEN

1 Vibhāṇḍaka said, "Son,
they are rākṣasas who walk
in the forest in strange
disguises; their powers
are amazing, their aim is
the obstruction of tapasyā.

2 *Tāta*, child! In the loveliest shapes,
in a variety of ways,
they seduce munis;
these monsters are capable
of reducing forest-dwelling munis
from happiness to misery.

3 Serene-minded munis
intent upon holiness
are not deceived;
these monsters find pleasure
in frustrating tapasyā;
therefore ignore them.

4 The water they drink, my son,
is intoxicating wine
drunk by the vicious,
refused by the righteous.
Their bright, scented garlands
are not meant for munis.

5 Son, they are rākṣasas."
So saying, Vibhāṇḍaka
went out searching for her.
He searched for three days;
unable to find her,
he returned to the āśrama.

6
The next time Ṛṣyaśṛṅga
went gathering for fruits,
the courtesan appeared
again on the scene,
intent on her mission
to tempt muni Ṛṣyaśṛṅga.

7
Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, seeing her,
was flooded with joy.
He ran towards her,
and said, "Let us go,
let us go to your āśrama
before my father returns."

8
Cleverly she managed
to get him to enter
the boat, and unmoored it;
she found ways of pleasing him,
and succeeded in bringing him
to the king of Aṅga.

9
Keeping the white boat
moored on the water
within sight of the āśrama,
the king had a floating
āśrama constructed
specially for the ṛṣi.

10
But the son of rājā Vibhāṇḍaka,
Ṛṣyaśṛṅga was taken
to the female apartments;
and the skies opened,
and rain poured down,
and the world was flooded.

11
His desire fulfilled,
Lomapāda gave his daughter
Śāntā to Ṛṣyaśṛṅga.
To appease his father,
he placed cows on the roads
and had the fields tilled

12 Along the paths Vibhāṇḍaka
would take to the palace.
He placed many animals
along with their keepers,
saying, "When mahā-ṛṣi Vibhāṇḍaka
asks for his son,

13 With palms folded in *añjali*
say, 'These cows and fields
belong to your son.
How can we serve you?
Mahā-ṛṣi, command us.
We are your servants'."

14 The awesome muni Vibhāṇḍaka
returned to his āśrama
with roots and fruits,
and found his son missing.
After searching and failing
to find him, furious,

15 He surmised that the person
responsible was Aṅga's king.
"I'll burn the rājā,
his city and country!" –
With that in his mind,
he set out for Campā.

16 Tired and hungry,
he arrived at the farms
of the cow-rich settlers.
Honoured with pūjā-respect,
he spent the night there
in royal comfort.

17 Struck by their kindness,
he asked them, "Cowherds,
who is your master?"
They came up to him,
and said to him,
"Your son is our master."

18 Wherever he went,
he received the same pūjā-respect,
the same sweet words.
His anger appeased,
he entered the city
of the king of Aṅga.

19 Given pūjā-respect by the king,
he saw his son sitting
like Indra in heaven;
he also saw Śāntā,
his daughter-in-law, dazzling
like a flash of lightning.

20 When he saw the villages
and cowpens belonging
to his son, his anger faded.
He was pleased with Śāntā,
his daughter-in-law, dazzling
like a flash of lightning.

21 The mahā-ṛṣi left his son behind,
and radiant like the sun, like fire,
he said, "Please the rājā,
my child, and have a son;
having done that,
return to the forest."

22 Ṛṣyaśṛṅga did as told,
and returned to the āśrama
of his father in the forest.
And Śāntā faithfully
waited upon him
like Rohiṇī on Soma, the moon,

23 Like gracious Arundhatī on Vasiṣṭha,
Lopāmudrā on Agastya,
Damayantī on Nala,
Śacī on Vajradhara-Indra
This is how Śāntā
waited on Ṛṣyaśṛṅga.

24 Like Indrasenā to Mudgala,
was Śāntā to Ṛṣyaśṛṅga;
like Sītā to Rāma,
and Draupadī to the Pāṇḍavas
was loving Śāntā to Ṛṣyaśṛṅga
in the forest āśrama.

25 The āśrama that you see
once belonged to him.
If you bathe in its lake,
your desires are fulfilled.
Bathe here, O rājā,
before going to other *tīrthas.*

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FOURTEEN

1 O Janamejaya! Beginning with Kauśikī
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the Pāṇḍavas one by one visited
all the *tīrthas* of the river.

2 They went to the place
where Kauśikī joins the ocean,
and Yudhiṣṭhira bathed
in the five-hundred-river *tīrtha.*

3 O Bharata descendant! Accompanied by his brothers,
Yudhiṣṭhira traversed
the coastal belt
till he came to Kaliṅga.

4 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira (Lomaśa said),
in Kaliṅga flows the Vaitaraṇī
where god-guarded Dharma
performed yajñas.

5 This is its northern bank,
inhabited by ṛṣis, visited by Brahmins,
a hill-adorned ideal spot
for yajñas.

6 It equals the path
by which a virtuous man
goes to heaven.
In the past, ṛṣis performed yajñas here.

7 O Indra-among-rājās! It was here
that Rudra-Śiva seized the yajña-animal.
Greatest of kings, he then exclaimed,
"This is my share!"

8 O bull-brave Bharata! The yajña-beast snatched,
the gods said to him:
"Do not covet others' property.
Have some regard for dharma."

9 They placated Rudra-Śiva with praises
in his honour.
They performed a special yajña
solely dedicated to him.

10 So he returned the beast,
and followed the path of the gods.
Let me tell you, Yudhiṣṭhira,
what happened to Rudra-Śiva.

11 Fearing Rudra-Śiva, the gods decided
to set apart for all time
the best – the fresh – part of a yajña
for him.

12 The man who bathes in this spot
and chants this ancient story,
actually sees the path
that leads to heaven.

13 All the mahā-fortune-favoured Pāṇḍavas
along with Draupadī
bathed in the Vaitaraṇī
and worshipped the *pitṛs*.

14 "Lomaśa," exclaimed Yudhiṣṭhira,
"look at the tapasyā-merits
of holy bathing!
I seem to be walking on air!

15 Strict-vowed ṛṣi, with your help
I will see all the regions.
I hear now the chants
of mahātmā ṛṣis."

16 Yudhiṣṭhira (Lomaśa replied),
the chants you hear
come from three hundred thousand *yojanas* away.
Be silent, O lord of the earth.

17 O rājā! This is the forest of Self-Born Svayambhu-
Brahmā, where, O Indra-among-rājās,
the powerful ṛṣi Viśvāmitra
performed his yajñas.

18 In these yajnas Self-Born Brahmā
gave to mahātmā Kaśyapa,
as *dakṣiṇā,* this earth with its rivers,
mountains and countries.

19 Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
The given-away earth became dejected;
and she said angrily
to the lord of the worlds:

20 *"Bhagavān!* Revered one, you should not gift me
to a mere mortal.
Your giving I will frustrate
by descending into Rasātala-Pātāla."

21 Seeing the Earth sad and resentful,
the *bhagavan* ṛṣi Kaśyapā
pleased her
by an act of propitiation.

22 Son-of-Pāṇḍu Yudhiṣṭhira,
the earth was pleased by his tapasyā.
She rose from the waters
in the form of a *yajña*-altar.

23 In front of us is that *yajña*-altar.
O rājā,
approach it with reverence,
be filled with prowess, mahārāja,

24 For this sacred altar stretches
as far as the sea;
approach it and be blessed, O rājā,
and straddle the sea.

25 When you approach it, O descendant of Ajamīḍha,
chant the disaster-averting *svasti*-benediction;
this altar goes down
to the deepest sea.

26 *Aum!*
I bow to the Protector of the Universe!
I bow to Him Who transcends the Universe!
O God of gods! Deveśa!
Come and live in the salt-tasting ocean!

27 *Fire and Sun and the Divine Waters –*
These are your womb.
You are the seed of Viṣṇu,
You the navel of nectar!
With these words of truth, O Pāṇḍava son Yudhiṣṭhira,
Approach the altar.

28 *O Great Ocean,*
Fire is your Womb,
Earth is your Body,
Viṣṇu's seed your breath of life,
You are the navel of nectar!
Clearly and reverently reciting this,
Should one bathe in the Ocean, the lord of all rivers.

29 If that cannot be done, O finest of the Kauravas,
do not touch the womb
of this divine mass of waters
even with a *kuśa* grass.

30 The *svasti*-chanting over,
mahā-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira
bathed in the ocean.
Following Lomaśa's instructions,
he went to Mahendra mountain
and passed the night there.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTEEN

1 Lord-of-the-earth Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
spent one night there,
honouring all the tapasyā-devotees.

2 Lomaśa gave him the names
of all devoted to tapasyā –
the Bhṛgus and Aṅgirasas,
Vāsiṣṭha and Kaśyapas.

3 The rājā-ṛṣi Yudhiṣṭhira visited all of them
and offered them *añjali.*
He asked valiant Akṛtavraṇa,
a follower of Paraśurāma:

4 "When will bhagavān Paraśurāma reveal himself
to his tapasyā-devotees here?
I will then have darshan
of the Bhṛgu-descendant."

5 Akṛtavraṇa replied, "Paraśurāma
intuitively knows of your arrival here.
He is pleased with you,
and will give you darshan.

6 The tapasyā-devotees see him
on the fourteenth and eighth days
of the lunar month.
Tonight is the start of the fourteenth lunar."

7 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "You are the disciple
of mahā-powerful Paraśurāma, Jamadagni's son.
You must have witnessed
all his great feats.

8 Tell us today the story of how Paraśurāma
defeated all the Kṣatriyas,
and why he decided
on such a venture."

9 Akṛtavraṇa said: Descendant of Bharata,
tiger-among-rājās,
Paraśurāma's is a long story;
I will narrate it

10 To you; it is a story related
to the story of Kārtavīrya,
king of the Haihayas.
That too you will hear.

11 Kārtavīrya-Arjuna, king of the Haihayas,
was killed by Paraśurāma;
Kārtavīrya-Arjuna had one thousand arms
and magnificent weapons.

12 Lord of the earth! Through Dattātreya's grace
he obtained a golden sky-chariot;
his wealth
was the creature-filled earth.

13 That chariot could travel anywhere freely.
With the power he got from various boons,
riding his chariot,
mahā-ātmaned Kārtavīrya-Arjuna

14 Trampled the gods, yakṣas, and ṛṣis.
He made it a habit
to persecute any creatures
wherever he found them.

15 So the gods and the mahā-strict-vowed ṛṣis
consulted each other,
and they approached the god of gods,
the antigod-slayer truly valiant Viṣṇu,

16 And said: "Lord, *prabhu,*
kill Arjuna, and save us.
The ruler of the Haihayas,
in his magnificent chariot,

17 Attacked even Vāsava-Indra
in the intimate presence of Indra's wife Śacī."
Bhagavān Viṣṇu met Śakra-Indra to devise a plan
for killing Kārtavīrya-Arjuna.

18 Surendra-Indra spoke with a desire
to benefit all creatures.
Adorable Viṣṇu, to whom the worlds offer pūjā,
promised to do so,

19 And went to Badari, his personal āśrama-maṇḍala.
At this time
there lived on earth a king
of truly mahā-powerful prowess,

20 Whose name was Gādhi;
he ruled the kingdom named Kanyākubja.
He decided to pass his days
in the forest.

21 A daughter was born to him,
she was as lovely as an apsarā.
Bhṛgu's son Ṛcīka asked for her
in marriage,

22 And Gādhi replied
to the strict-vowed Brahmin:
"From the most ancient times,
our family tradition

23 Has been, O excellent Brahmin,
that the bridegroom give a dowry
of one thousand swift,
brown-skinned, black-eared horses.

24 Son of Bhṛgu, I cannot ask you
for such a dowry.
Yet I cannot refuse you.
Do what you think is right."

25 "I will give you one thousand
swift, brown-skinned, black-eared horses,"
Ṛcīka replied.
"Let your daughter be my wife."

26 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
Ṛcīka made this promise and said to Varuṇa,
"Swift, brown-skinned,
and black-eared horses –

27 Give me one hundred of those
for my dowry."
Varuṇa immediately gave him
a hundred horses.

28 The spot from where the horses emerged
in the Gaṅgā at Kānyakubja
is the Horse-*Tīrtha.*
King Gādhi gave Satyavatī,

29 His daughter, to Ṛcīka;
the gods came to the wedding.
This is how the incomparable Brahmin Ṛcīka
obtained

30 A thousand horses, and a wife as well,
and saw the gods.
He was happy
with his slim-waisted wife.

31 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! After the wedding,
Bhṛgu visited his excellent son Ṛcīka.
Husband and wife received him
and honoured him; he was pleased.

32 After the god-adored guru Bhṛgu sat down,
husband and wife stood
waiting for his words,
palms folded in *añjali.*

33 Bhagavān Bhṛgu, delighted,
said to his daughter-in-law,
"Fortunate one, ask for a boon.
I will grant your desire."

34 She gratified the guru
in the hope of obtaining a son
for her and her mother;
and he granted her wish.

35 Bhṛgu said, "To obtain a son,
during your periods you and your mother,
after bathing, should embrace two trees –
she an *aśvattha*, you a fig-*udumbara.*

36 Gracious one, I have searched all the world,
to make these two oblations
of butter-and-milk-boiled-and-pulse –
and I have painstakingly prepared them

37 For you. Take them carefully."
Then he disappeared.
The careless women mixed up
the oblations and embracings.

38 A long time later
the bhagavān ṛṣi Bhṛgu again came there;
he got the news
by supernatural insight.

39 The mahā-radiant ṛṣi Bhṛgu
said to his daughter-in-law Satyavatī,
"Gracious one,
you took the wrong *caru* and tree;

40 Your mother deceived you.
Your son
will be born a Brahmin
but he will behave like a Kṣatriya.

41 Your mother's son will be born
a mahā-valiant Kṣatriya
but behave like a Brahmin;
he will walk the good path."

42 She repeatedly pleaded
before her father-in-law,
"Spare my son from this.
Let my grandson be so instead."

43 Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
He replied, "It will be so."
At the proper time,
her son Jamadagni was born –

44 A Bhṛgu descendant
of surpassing glory and grace.
He grew; his strength grew;
he excelled in the Vedas.

45 O bull-brave Bharata, the sun-lustrous boy
mastered the four branches of war-craft
a well as the Veda of bowcraft
with casual ease.

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SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTEEN

1 Jamadagni engaged in mahā-tapasyā
  and devoted himself
to study of the Vedas.
  He surpassed even the gods.

2 He approached the lord-of-men Prasenjit
  and asked
for Reṇukā in marriage;
  the king happily bestowed his daughter.

3 The Bhārgava descendant Jamadagni
  brought his wife Reṇukā
with him to his āśrama;
  she assisted him in this tapasyā.

4 She had five sons,
  Paraśurāma being the fifth.
Though the youngest,
  he excelled them all in merit.

5 It so happened that one day,
  when all her sons
were away gathering fruits,
  strict-vowed Reṇukā went to bathe.

6 O rājā! While she was having her bath,
  Reṇukā glanced
at the king of Mārtikāvataka,
  shining Citraratha.

7 He was wearing a lotus-garland,
  and splashing an the river
with his wives.
  Her heart filled with desire.

8 Unable to control herself,
  she polluted herself in the water.
She returned to the āśrama.
  Her husband guessed the truth.

9 Seeing her shaking,
  destitute of the radiance of her chastity,
the mahā-radiant ṛṣi reproached her:
  "*Dhik!* Shame on you!"

10 Jamadagni's eldest son Rumaṇvān came;
then came Suṣeṇa,
followed by Vasu,
and Viśvāvasu.

11 The bhagavān ṛṣi ordered all,
one by one, to kill their mother;
but they were stupefied,
and stood speechless.

12 So he cursed them,
and they lost their reason,
and became like birds,
or like animals.

13 Paraśurāma, slayer of foes,
came to the āśrama last of all.
Mahā-powerful Jamadagni of mahā-tapasyā
said to him:

14 "Son, kill this wicked mother of yours
without any compunction!"
Paraśurāma with an axe
cut off his mother's head.

15 Mahā-ātmaned Jamadagni's anger
cooled suddenly, mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
He said in a pleased voice
to Paraśurāma:

16 "Son, you know dharma, *tāta*, my child,
you obeyed a most difficult order,
Ask for anything you want,
and I will grant it."

17 Paraśurāma asked that his mother
be restored to life,
that she should not remember
his cruel deed,
that no taint touch him,
that his brothers be revived too,

18 That he become invincible in battle,
and attain long life.
The ṛṣi of mahā-tapasyā Jamadagni
granted him these boons.

[III:116:19-27]

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19 It so happened that once,
when his sons were away,
the heroic sea-shore king Kārtavīrya-Arjuna
came to the āśrama.

20 He was welcomed into the āśrama
by the ṛṣi's wife.
So great was his ego, however,
that he was not pleased.

21 Overcoming all resistance, he ran away
with the āśrama's ghee-giving cow,
while her calf bellowed.
He tore down the towering āśrama-trees.

22 Paraśurāma heard all this from his father
when he returned,
The spectacle of the piteously lowing calf
made him furious.

23 He rushed
at death-doomed Kārtavīrya's son.
The foe-destroying Bhṛgu descendant
showed his skill

24 By shooting sharp arrows
from a handsome bow –
he sliced off all the thousand
iron-bolt-like arms

25 Of Kārtavīrya-Arjuna, who was under the spell
of Cosmic Time Kāla.
Kārtavīrya-Arjuna's revenge-seeking kinsmen
rushed at the ṛṣi

26 Jamadagni when Paraśurāma
was not in the āśrama.
They butchered the powerful ṛṣi
while he was doing tapasyā.

27 He cried in piteous agony,
"Paraśurāma!",
while they attacked him.
Kārtavīrya-Arjuna's sons pierced him with arrows.

28 Having wreaked their revenge, O Yudhiṣṭhira,
they went away.
After they had left, Jamadagni,
lonely ṛṣi, descendant of Bhārgava, died,

29 And was discovered by Paraśurāma
who was bringing fuel
for the āśrama's sacred fires.
Paraśurāma bitterly mourned his father.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEEN

1 "*Tāta*, dear father," he lamented,
"it was my fault
Kārtavīrya-Arjuna
butchered you like a forest-deer.

2 *Tāta*, dear father, you were wise in dharma,
steady in the truth;
how is it possible that you should die
in this way?

3 What a horrible crime to butcher
with hundreds of arrows
an old man devoted to tapasyā
and unwilling to defend himself!

4 How can they even mention this heinous deed
to friends and relatives –
this slaughter
of a dharma-cherishing defenceless man?"

5 Paraśurāma of mahā-tapasyā poured out his grief
like this,
and performed the funeral rites
for his father.

6 Hostile-city-conquering Paraśurāma
lit the funeral pyre of his father
and took a vow
to exterminate all Kṣatriyas.

7 The incredibly puissant hero,
equal to Antaka-Yama himself,
angrily picked up his weapons,
and singly killed Kārtavīrya-Arjuna's sons.

8 The bull-brave Kṣatriya,
arms-brandishing Paraśurāma
single-handed also slaughtered all the followers
of Kārtavīrya-Arjuna's sons.

9 He denuded the earth of Kṣatriyas
twentyone time over.
With the blood spilt he created five lakes
in Samantapañcaka.

10 After the perpetuator of the Bhṛgus
had offered oblations to his *pitṛs,*
Ṛcīka appeared before him
and stopped him.

11 Jamadagni's illustrious son offered oblations
to the lord-of-the-gods Devendra-Indra
in a mahā yajña
that gifted the earth to *ṛtviks.*

12 O lord of the earth! The altar was of gold,
is was forty arm's-lengths square,
thirtysix arm's-lengths high.
He gifted it to mahā-ātmaned Kaśyapa.

13 At Kaśyapa's request, the Brahmins
divided it into various portions;
they are called Khāṇḍavāyanans,
or the "Share-takers".

14 With the earth gifted to mahātmā Kaśyapa,
Paraśurāma went to Mahendra mountain
where he continues to live
to this day.

15 This is the story of the war
between him and the earth's Kṣatriyas.
The whole world was conquered
by radiant Paraśurāma.

16 On the fourteenth day
of the full-moon fortnight *Caturdaśi*
mahā-minded Paraśurāma appeared
before Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

17 Indra-among-rājās Yudhiṣṭhira
and all his brothers
offered reverence to the Brahmins,
and pūjā to Paraśurāma.

18 After offering pūjā-respect to Jamadagni's son
and receiving his blessing,
Yudhiṣṭhira spent a night on Mahendra
before departing southwards.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEEN

1 The mahā-liberal king
went to many *tīrthas*
along the seacoast,
all of them adorned
with the presence of Brahmins
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

2 Bathing in them
and generously donating,
Pāṇḍu's eldest son
along with his brothers
came to the banks
of a wide, holy river.

3 Bathing there, he offered
oblations to the gods
and revered the *pitṛs*,
giving wealth to Brahmins,
he came to the ocean-
seeking river Godāvarī.

4 Cleansed of his ill-deeds,
he came to the ocean
in the Drāviḍa region,
where he saw the maha-purifying
Agastya āśrama
and the Nārī *tīrtha*.

5 There he heard the story
of bow-wielding Arjuna's
remarkable feat
unequalled by man.
Praised by the ṛṣis,
he was deeply pleased.

6 The lord of the earth
with Draupadī and his brothers
praised the great prowess
of his brother Arjuna
and lived there happily
for a short time.

7 He gave one thousand cows
in the *tīrthas* he visited
on the shores of the sea.
He and his brothers
repeatedly remembered
Arjuna's gift of cows.

8 One by one he visited
the *tīrthas* recommended
and other holy places.
His desires were fulfilled,
and he went to the supremely
sacred Śūrpāraka.

9 Crossing a section
of the land along the sea,
he came to a world-
famous forest, where in the past
the gods did tapasyā
and the kings performed yajñas.

10 The long-armed hero
saw the altar of Ṛcīka's
bow-wielding son.
Full of tapasyā-practisers,
it was an altar deserving
the worship of the virtuous.

11 He saw the soothing
and sacred shrines
of the gods: of the Vasus,
of Yama, the Aśvins,
Āditya, Maruts, Kubera,
Indra and Viṣṇu;

12 Of Bhava-Śiva and the Moon,
of the Sun-Creator, Divākara,
of the lord of the waters,
the hosts of Sādhyas,
of Brahmā, the *pitṛs*,
of mahātmā Rudra;

13 Of the goddess Sarasvatī,
of the Siddhas,
and many other venerated
and illustrious gods.

14 He fasted in these *tīrthas*
and gave away jewels
to illustrious Brahmins.
Bathing in the waters
of these holy places,
he returned to Śūrpāraka.

15 He and his brothers
next travelled to *tīrthas*
that dotted the sea-coast,
till they came to Prabhāsa,
whose fame had been carried
by Brahmins to all places.

16 The pink-eyed hero
bathed with his brothers
and revered the *pitṛs*
and the gods, as did Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
along with the Brahmins
including Lomaśa.

17 Twelve days he subsisted
on water and air;
day and night he bathed;
Excelling-in-dharma,
he ordered fires kindled
to assist his tapasyā.

18 Balarāma and Janārdana-Krishna
heard of his tapasya;
the lord of the Vṛṣṇis,
escorted by soldiers,
came to meet Yudhiṣṭhira,
descendant of Ajamīḍha.

19 They saw the Pāṇḍavas lying
dust-smeared on the ground;
they saw Draupadī
in her great deprivation;
they were filled with sorrow,
and expressed their concern.

20 Yudhiṣṭhira the undespairing
received Balarāma and Krishna
with dharma-respect
and also gave honour
to Krishna's son Sāmba
and the other Vṛṣṇis.

21 They reciprocated,
greeting the son of Pāṇḍu
with courteous affection.
They sat around Yudhiṣṭhira,
as the gods round Indra
in the sabhā of heaven.

22 Yudhiṣṭhira was pleased,
and told them the details
of the plots of his foes,
their life in the forest,
the absence of Arjuna –
he said all this gladly.

23 And they too were pleased
to get news from him.
But seeing the Pāṇḍavas
weak and lean, the large-
hearted Vṛṣṇis shed tears
of spontaneous sorrow.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETEEN

1 "O tapasyā-rich ṛṣi (asked Janamejaya),
what did the Pāṇḍavas and Vṛṣṇis
do on sacred Prabhāsa?
what did they discuss?

2 All of them were mahātmās,
they were skilled
in all śāstras of knowledge,
and they were intimate friends."

3 Vaiśampāyana replied:
Arriving at the *tīrtha*
on the seacoast,
the Vṛṣṇis waited on the Pāṇḍavas.

4 Ploughshare-wielding Balarāma,
white as cow-milk,
as *kunda*-flower, as silver, moon,
or lotus-root,
and wearing a wildflower garland,
said to lotus-eyed Krishna:

5 "Krishna, dharma gives no good,
adharma brings no evil –
look, mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira suffers, matted-haired,
he wears bark-dress in the forest.

6 Duryodhana rules the earth –
the earth does not swallow
him up. It's natural
the common man thinks
adharma is preferable
to a life of dharma.

7 Duryodhana prospers,
and Yudhiṣṭhira declines,
robbed of his throne.
What should a man do?
It's all so perplexing.
My mind's all confused.

8 Dharma's own son, Indra-among-rājās,
steady in dharma,
devoted to truth,
would give up his kingdom
rather than swerve
from the path of dharma.

9 How can Bhīṣma and Kṛpa,
Droṇa, rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and all the other Kauravas
live happily after banishing
the sons of Kuntī? *Dhik*!
Shame on the eminent scoundrels!

10 What will Dhṛtarāṣṭra
have to say to his *pitṛs*
when he meets them in the next world?
Having deprived his innocent sons
of their throne,
will he say he is blameless?

11 He cannot now see
with the eye of wisdom,
how blind he has become
among the world's kings;
blind because he banished
the sons of Kuntī.

12 When Vicitravīrya's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and Duryodhana banished
the sons of Kuntī,
did they see the ill omen
of golden trees flowering
in the realms of the *pitṛs*?

13 When he banished Yudhiṣṭhira
and his younger brothers,
what did he say
to the hunched Pāṇḍavas
glaring red-eyed at him –
and what did they reply?

14 Bhīma the wolf-waisted
can with his bare hands
rout an army of foes.
When he shouts his war-cry
in battle, the enemy in fear
wrinates and defecates.

15 That same hero now
is hungry and thirsty
and tired with wandering.
When he readies for battle,
will he not remember
his sufferings in exile?

16 Who is there in the world
his equal in strength
and battle-prowess ?
Now weak with cold and heat,
but when he stands and fights,
he will exterminate all.

17 Single-charioted Bhīma
defeated the kings
of the lands of the east;
and returned unharmed.
And now he is sadly
dressed in bark-cloth.

18 The kings of the south
assembled on the seacoast
were routed by Sahadeva;
now they see him moving
in the humiliating garb
of a forest-hermit.

19 The kings of the west
were defeated single-handed
by valiant Nakula.
Matted-haired and ash-smeared,
he roams in the forest,
nibbling roots and fruits.

20 Draupadī, the daughter
of a chariot-hero rājā,
an altar-born lady,
accustomed to living
in comfort and ease –
how can she bear her pain?

21 How can Yudhiṣṭhira,
lord of dharma-artha-kāma,
how can the son of Vāyu,
how can the son of Indra,
the twin sons of Aśvins,
bear this degradation?

22 Why didn't the earth
and the hills of the earth
sink when Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
his wife and brothers,
and all his followers
were banished by Duryodhana?"

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY

1 Sātyaki said, "Balarāma,
no point in lamenting.
Let us act quickly,
and do what is proper
in the present time,
though Yudhiṣṭhira is silent.

2 There are men in this world
looked after by others:
they don't themselves work.
Others do their work –
as king Śibi and others
helped out Yayāti.

3 People who have friends
acting independently
to help them in crises –
such people never suffer, Balarāma,
unlike those who have none
in the world to help them.

4 How do you explain
that with Janārdana-Krishna and Balarāma,
I, Sāmba and Pradyumna –
the guardians of the worlds –
ready to help friends,
the Pāṇḍavas still suffer?

5 Let the Dāśārhas march
this very day
armed and armoured –
let the Vṛṣṇis attack
the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and despatch them to Yama.

6 Let Krishna be – who wields
the Śārṅga-bow carved of horn;
you, O world destroyer,
you can kill Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons,
together with their allies,
as Indra killed Vṛtra.

7 Arjuna is my brother,
my *sakhā*-friend and my guru,
he is a second Janārdana-Krishna.
Why is a worthy son
desired by a man,
a disciple desired by a guru?

8 Let us show them why –
by doing this very day
an excellent deed,
a near-impossible deed.
I will confront Duryodhana
and rout him in battle.

9 My weapons like snakes,
like poison, like fire,
will slice off his head.
I will take up my sword
and sever his head
on the field of battle.

10 After which I will kill
his minions and the Kauravas.
Come, son of Rohiṇī,
watch valiant warriors
joyfully applaud me
as I take to battle.

11 I'll kill the Kuru warriors
like fire consuming straw
at the end of a yuga.
Kṛpa, Droṇa, Karṇa
and Vikarṇa are no match
for the arrows of Pradyumna.

12 I know Pradyumna,
and how this son of Krishna
fights on the battlefield.
And Sāmba will rout
Duḥśāsana on his chariot
in the field of battle.

13 Nothing can withstand
the irresistible force
of Jāmbavatī's son Sāmba.
The anti-god Śāmba
was routed when Sāmba
was only a boy.

14 Round-thighed Aśvacakra
of long, strong arms
was killed by him too.
Who is there living
who dares to challenge heroic
chariot-driving Sāmba?

15 What man can escape
the clutches of Kāla?
What man is there
who comes in the clutches
of Sāmba on the battlefield
and escapes with his life?

16 And Vāsudeva-Krishna
with his fiery weapons
can kill all the soldiers
of Bhīṣma and Droṇa,
as well as Somadatta
protected by his sons.

17 Who is there in the world
or who among the gods
who dares challenge Krishna?
When he wields the cakra,
when he shoots his arrows,
he is unparalleled.

18 Tell Aniruddha also
to don armour and sword –
let him scatter the earth
with the heads of the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, like *kuśa*-grass
heaped on an altar.

19 Gada and Ulmuka,
Bhānu, Bāhuka,
Nītha and youthful
but heroic Niśaṭha,
Sāraṇa, Cārudeṣṇa –
let them show their skill!

20 Let Śūras and Sātvatas,
and Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas,
join forces in battle,
and kill all the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and win fame in the world.

21 While Yudhiṣṭhira is firm
to the vow that he took
at the time of the dice-game,
let Abhimanyu rule
in place of the mahātmā,
dharma-firm Yudhiṣṭhira.

22 Let Dharma-rāja Yudhiṣṭhira
rule after we kill
all his enemies in battle.
Surely fame is ours
if we kill Duryodhana
and the Sūta's son Karṇa."

23 "Sātyaki," said Vāsudeva-Krishna,
"what you say is right.
I accept your views.
But Yudhiṣṭhira is adamant –
he will not rule land
he has not himself won.

24 Neither kāma nor gain,
nor greed, nor fear,
neither Bhīma nor Arjuna,
neither the twins nor Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
can make him swerve
from his sva-dharma.

25 Arjuna and Bhīma
are known as unrivalled
on the field of battle.
With Mādrī's sons helping,
why should not Yudhiṣṭhira
rule the whole world?

26 With Pāñcāla helping,
with Kekaya's assistance,
with our help too –
Yudhiṣṭhira can surely
utterly wipe out
all the foes that he has."

27 "Not surprising, Mādhava-Sātyaki,"
was Yudhiṣṭhira's reply,
"you should speak in this way.
What I value is truth,
even more than kingship.
Krishna knows me, I know Krishna.

28 Mādhava of the Śinis! Sātyaki!
When gem–among-men Krishna
sees fit to rise
and show martial valour,
then you and he
with defeat Duryodhana.

29 Let the Dāśārha heroes,
who have come to help me,
return home today.
Never discard dharma,
O greatest of heroes!
We will meet again."

30 They took leave of each other,
the seniors blessing the juniors
who revered them.
The Pāṇḍavas and Yādavas parted,
and the Pāṇḍavas
resumed their *tīrtha*-journey.

31 Bidding farewell to Krishna,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
and Lomaśa and their attendants
went to the Payoṣṇī,
the sacred river where
the Vidarbha king worshipped.

32 He lived on the banks
of the Payoṣṇī whose waters
mingled with soma-rasa.
There Yudhiṣṭhira was praised
by the chiefs of Brahmins
who lived there and worshipped.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-ONE

1 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! It is said (continued Lomaśa)
that enemy-city-destroying Puraṁdara Indra
was deeply gratified by the yajñas
that king Nṛga performed at this *tīrtha*.

2 Here Prajāpati Brahmā, and Indra, and the gods
performed massive yajñas
and offered *dakṣiṇās*
to the ritual priests.

3 Rājā Amurtaraya's son
offered soma-rasa libations
to thunder-wielding Vajra-dhara Indra
in seven Horse-yajñas.

4 What in other yajñas is normally made
from wood and earth
was fashioned in these yajñas
out of pure gold.

5 I have heard that in these yajñas
seven sets of stakes,
and rings for them, pots, ladles, spoons
and utensils were made.

6 On each yajña-stake were seven rings.
Yudhiṣṭhira,
the gods personally, supervised by Indra,
constructed

7 The golden stakes
meant for the yajña-rites.
In these magnificent yajñas
of lord-of-the-earth Gaya,

8 Indra was gratified
by drinking the soma-juice,
and the priests by large *dakṣiṇās*;
the Brahmins received much wealth.

9 Like grains of sand on earth,
like stars in the sky,
like raindrops when it rains –
all uncountable –

10 The wealth that Gaya gifted
could not be counted.
Mahārāja, it might be possible
to count stars and raindrops,

11 But the *dakṣiṇās* given during these seven yajñas
are beyond calculation
Nothing before had been gifted
so hugely.

12 The king pleased Brahmin priests
by giving them
golden sculptures of cows
fashioned by Viśvakarma.

13 O lord of the earth! At the yajñas of Gaya,
there were so many yajña-stakes
it seemed no spot
was left free on earth.

14 O descendant of Bharata!
By that act he attained the realm of Indra.
The pilgrim who bathes in the Payoṣṇī
attains the same realm.

15 Therefore, lord of the earth,
O Indra-among-rājās, undeclining protector,
bathe with your brothers here,
and be freed of misdeeds.

16 Bathing in the Payoṣṇī with his brothers,
finest-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira
went to Vaidūrya hill
and the Narmadā mahā-nadī.

17 Vaiśampāyana added: Bhagavan-ṛṣi Lomaśa
gave him vivid accounts of all *tīrthas.*
He visited them all and gave large *dakṣiṇās*
to thousands of Brahmins.

18 Son of Kuntī (said Lomaśa),
by seeing Vaidūrya
and bathing in the Narmadā,
one gets the realm of gods and rājās.

19 Kuntī's son,
this is the meeting point
of the Tretā and Dvāpara yugas;
here a man is cleansed of all misdeeds.

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20 *Tāta,* child, this is where Śaryāti
performed his yajñas.
Indra and the Aśvins appeared
and drank soma-juice.

21 The mahā-tapasyā descendant of Bhṛgu,
Cyavana,
here petrified Mahendra-Indra
and won princess Sukanyā as his wife.

22 "Why was Pāka-chastising Bhagavān Indra petrified?
asked Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Why did the Bhārgava ṛṣi of mahā-tapasyā
become so angry?

23 Brahmin, why did he make the Nāsatya-Aśvins
the yajña's soma-drinkers?
Bhagavān, tell me the story
in detail."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-TWO

1 Lomaśa replied: O Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira,
the son of the mahā ṛṣi Bhṛgu
was mahā-radiant Cyavana,
who practised tapasyā near this lake.

2 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira! Mahā-illustrious Cyavana
once began meditating in the hero-posture
and continued to do so for a very long time,
O lord of the earth.

3 O rājā! It so happened
that an ant-hill grew up around him,
and creepers grew on it;
ants scurried over his body.

4 He looked like an ant-smeared
heap of earth;
but he continued nevertheless
to practise severe tapasyā.

5 A long time passed.
A king called Śaryāti
came to amuse himself
near that lovely lake.

6 O Bharata descendant Yudhiṣṭhira!
He brought his four thousand wives with him;
also with him
was his exquisitely beautiful daughter Sukanyā.

7 Wearing glittering ornaments,
surrounded by her *sakhīs,*
she came to the ant-hill
which covered Bhārgava Cyavana.

8 She and her *sakhīs*
began to play games there,
admiring the beauty
of the tall forest trees.

9 She was young and lovely
and sensuous and light-headed;
she began snapping off
the flower-laden branches.

10 Bhṛgu's son saw her
when no *sakhīs* were with her;
she was wearing a single cloth, her jewels glittered;
she was like a flash of lightning.

11 He saw her playing in the lonely forest;
the radiantly powerful ṛṣi,
a soft-voiced man,
was filled with passion,

12 And spoke to the gracious girl
(though she could not see him).
Suddenly she spotted
the Bhārgava's eyes in the ant-hill;

13 She was dumbfounded for a moment;
then thinking,
What can this be? she pushed a thorn
in each eye.

14 He felt a searing pain rush through him;
enraged,
he stopped Śaryāti's soldiers
from defecating and urinating.

15 They wallowed in agony
with their urine and stool blocked.
The king was greatly surprised,
and said:

16 "Has someone interfered with Bhṛgu's son,
the mahātmā,
the aged man of tapasyā
whose tęmper is notorious?

17 If anyone knows anything, out with it!
Right now!"
The soldiers replied,
"We know none who has harmed him.

18 Please have someone equire
into the matter."
The king, holding out both threat
and conciliation,

19 Enquired from his friends,
but none knew anything.
Meanwhile the soldiers continued
to writhe in pain.

20 Sukanyā, seeing her father troubled,
said to him,
"Father, wandering in the forest,
I saw something flashing

21 Inside an ant-hill;
I thought it was a glow-worm,
I pierced it with a thorn."
Śaryāti went to the ant-hill,

22 And saw Bhṛgu's son, old in years
and in tapasyā.
Folding his hands in *añjali*, the lord of the earth
begged forgiveness:

23 "You should forgive her for something
my little girl did out of ignorance."
Bhṛgu's son Cyavana
said to the world-ruler:

24 "This girl, puffed with pride,
pierced my eyes.
Though she is foolish and conceited,
yet she is lovely,

25 This daughter of yours,
and I will have her, O rājā, as my wife.
That is the condition of my forgiving you.
Lord of the earth, I speak the truth."

26 Śaryāti did not think twice;
as soon as he heard the condition
he bestowed his daughter
on mahātmā Cyavana.

27 The bhagavān ṛṣi was pleased
with the king's promptitude.
The forgiven rājā returned to his capital
with his soldiers.

28 Spotless Sukanyā,
married to a remarkable man of tapasyā,
began to serve her husband
with diligent care.

29 The lovely-figured, never-finding-fault girl
honoured Cyavana,
pleasing his guests
and assisting in the sacred rituals.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-THREE

1 It so happened (Lomaśa continued)
that the twin gods, the Aśvins,
once saw Sukanyā
bathing naked.

2 She looked like the lovely-bodied daughter
of the rājā of the gods;
the twin Nāsatya Aśvins approached her
and said:

3 "Tapering-thighed lady, whose daughter are you?
What are you doing in the forest?
Lovely lady,
satisfy our curiosity."

4 Sukanyā shyly said
to the two excellent gods:
"I am the daughter of Śaryāti,
and wife of Cyavana.

5 I am known as Sukanyā
in the world of men;
I serve my husband
with all my heart."

6 The Aśvins smiled and said:
"*Kalyaṇī,* fortune-favoure one,
why has your father married you
to a dying man?

7 Shy beauty, you dazzle this forest
like a flash of lightning.
We have not seen your equal even in heaven,
lovely one.

8 Gracious lady, you look even lovelier
without ornaments and clothes;
your naked beauty
adorns the forest.

9 Faultless lady, even glorious dresses and jewels
could not make you
more attractive than you are
even in the muddy-water-covered state.

10 Auspicious one,
why do you have to be tied
to a decaying old man,
incapable of the pleasures of kāma?

11 Sweet-smiling one,
he cannot even support and protect you!
Leave him, and choose either of us
as your husband.

12 Make up your mind, and choose.
Divinely born one! Don't waste your youth."
Sukanyā listened to the twin gods,
and replied:

13 "I am faithful to my husband Cyavana.
Have no doubts about that."
But they said to her again;
"We are the divine physicians,

14 We will make your husband
young and handsome.
Then you may choose from the three of us,
anyone as your husband.

15 Inform your husband of this, lovely one,
and bring him here."
Following their suggestion,
she went to Bhṛgu's son, O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,

16 And repeated to him the words
of the twin gods.
Cyavana listened carefully to his wife
and replied, "Do it."

17 She returned to the gods
and told them:
"Transform my husband
into a young and handsome man."

18 They replied:
"Tell your husband to plunge into water."
Cyavana, eager to be handsome,
entered the waters

19 Of a lake, and the two Aśvins did likewise,
O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
In a few moments they emerged
from the lake.

20 They looked divinely young and handsome;
they wore glittering ear-rings;
all of them were dazzling
to look at.

21 They all said: "Lovely lady,
fortune-favoured one,
choose one among us as your husband,
lovely-limbed lady.

22 Ravishing-figured lady,
choose the man who pleases you most."
She saw all of them
looking perfectly alike,

23 And she hesitated; she began to think;
finally,
succeeding in recognising
her real husband,
she chose him.
Pleased with his youth, Cyavana

24 Said happily to the twin Aśvins,
"I was an old man;
you gave me my youth
as well as my wife;

25 So I will make you drinkers of soma-rasa
even in the presence
of the rājā of the gods, Indra.
I speak the truth."

26 The Aśvins were pleased by this,
and left for heaven.
And Cyavana and Sukanyā lived happily
like the gods.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FOUR

1 Learning that Cyavana had become
a youth again,
Śaryāti, pleased, came with his soldiers
to the āśrama.

2 Cyavana and Sukanyā
looked like two divine children;
Śaryāti and his wife were as happy
as two world-conquerors.

3 The king and his wife
were hospitably received by the ṛṣis.
Sitting beside Cyavana,
the king began a pleasant discussion.

4 Bhṛgu's son said reassuringly
to the world-ruler: "O rājā!
I will happily perform your yajña.
Let everything be readied."

5 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira!
The ruler of the earth Śaryāti
was overjoyed and expressed his pleasure
to the ṛṣi Cyavana.

6 An auspicious day was chosen
for the yajña.
Śaryāti ordered an altar erected
and had it splendidly furnished.

7 O rājā! Cvyavana, the son of Bhṛgu,
performed Śaryāti yajña.
Let me tell you what marvellous events
happened then.

8 Cyavana lifted a cup of soma-juice
to offer to the Aśvins,
the physicians of the gods.
Indra stopped him.

9 "These Aśvins have no right to the soma,"
said Indra.
"They are the gods' physicians,
so they are debarred."

10 "But they are young and handsome, Maghavan-Indra,"
replied Cyavana,
"they are brave and strong,
they gave me back my youth.

11 Why should you and other gods have a right
to the soma, and not they?
Purandara-Indra,
the Aśvins too are gods."

12 “They are physicians,” replied Indra,
“so they are servants. They change form at will
and roam in the world of mortals.
They have no right.”

13 Bhṛgu’s son Cyavana
refused to listen to Śakra-Indra,
the rājā of the gods;
and lifted the vessel of soma again.

14 Indra saw him pick up the vessel
to offer to the Aśvins;
Indra, destroyer of Bala,
said to Cyavana:

15 “If you make one more move
to offer the soma to the Aśvins,
I will hurl at you
my fearful all-surpassing thunderbolt.

16 The son of Bhṛgu merely smiled
and, looking at Indra,
picked up the soma-vessel
to offer to the Aśvins.

17 Śacī’s husband Indra immediately
flung at him the fierce thunderbolt.
But Bhṛgu’s son
neutralised it midway.

18 He paralysed Indra’s arms,
and continued chanting mantras
and feeding the sacred fire.
He attempted to kill mahā-radiant Indra

19 By creating, by the power of his tapasyā,
a huge
and immeasurably powerful mahā-antigod
named Mada.

20 The gods and anti-gods together
could not measure Mada’s girth:
his mouth was fierce;
two tusks protruded;

21 One jaw touched earth,
The other reached heaven,
Four of his fangs
Were a hundred *yojanas* each;

22 The other fangs were
A hundred *yojanas* too;
They were like palace-towers,
Like massive spear-tips;

23 His two arms were two hills,
Each of ten thousand *yojanas*.
His eyes were the sun and moon,
His face like the doom-fire of Kāla;

24 His tongue licked his mouth
With the speed of lightning,
His yawning mouth seemed
To devour the world.

25 He rushed at Śatakratu-Indra
Hoping to consume him.
The worlds reverberated
With his horrible roaring.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE

1 Seeing heinous-faced Mada
charging at him
with the gaping mouth of Death itself,
Śatakratu-Indra of a hundred sacrifices

2 Licked the corners of his mouth.
His arms were petrified.
A terrible fear took hold of him.
The rājā of the gods said:

3 "Son of Bhṛgu, Brahmin,
I promise you truly
the Aśvins are entitled to the soma.
Be merciful.

4 O great Brahmin ṛṣi,
whatever you do is bound to succeed.
I admit this.
You can never fail.

5 Bhṛgu's son, from today the twin Aśvins
have the right to drink soma.
I do this
to spread your own fame.

6 May the fame of the father of Sukanyā
also spread far and wide,
as a result
of your prowess.

7 What you wish will be done.
Forgive me."
When he heard Śakra-Indra say this,
mahātmā Cyavana

8 Was soon appeased, and he released Puraṁdara-Indra
from petrifaction.
He cut Mada and distributed the fragments
in liquor, in women,

9 In gambling, and hunting.
In this way
Mada was re-created afresh.
Then he offered Śakra-Indra soma.

10 He helped king Śaryāti to perform many yajñas
to the gods and Aśvins.
In this way
his fame spread far and wide.

11 And he lived happily with Sukanyā
in the forest.
This is his lake, O rājā,
echoing with birdsong.

12 You and your brothers must here worship
the *pitṛs* and the gods.
Having done so, go to Sikatākṣa,
O Bharata descendant Yudhiṣṭhira,

13 And from there to the Saindhava forest
full of pretty man-made rivulets.
Touch the waters of all *tīrthas* there.
mahārāja,

14 And chant the mantras of Sthāṇu-Śiva,
and find fulfilment, O Bharata-descendant.
This is the joining-point
of the Tretā and Dvāpara yugas.

15 Merely to see it, son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
is to be washed of all misdeeds.
Perform your all crime-cleansing ablutions
here.

16 Ahead is the Ārcīka hill,
where cultivated men live, where the Maruts live,
where perennial fruits grow and streams flow –
a seductive place.

17 There are god-made caves here.
This is the moon's *tīrtha*, Yudhiṣṭhira,
surrounded on all sides
by the marvellous Vālakhilya ṛṣis.

18 There are three peaks here
and three sacred springs;
circumambulate them all,
and offer your worship here.

19 O Indra-among-rājās,
king Sāntanu, Śunaka, Nara-Nārāyaṇa –
all attained the eternal realms
from this region.

20 Yudhiṣṭhira, the *pitṛs*, gods, and mahārṣis
find peace
by practising tapasyā on Ārcīka.
Do your worship here.

21 O lord of the earth!
Here they cooked *caru* with the ṛṣis;
here you will see the everlasting river Yamunā
where Krishna practised tapasyā.

22 Son of Pāṇḍu, humbler of your foes,
the twins, Bhīma and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
will accompany you
to this spot.

23 Ruler of men,
this is the holy spring of Indra,
from where Dhātā, Vidhātā and Varuṇa
rose skywards.

24 O rājā! Here they live cultivating fortitude
and following the highest of dharmas.
This auspicious hill
is for kind, honest pilgrims.

25 O rājā! This is the Yamunā-*tīrtha*
where all mahā-ṛṣis come –
the scene of innumerable yajñas;
it destroys the dread of ill-deed.

26 Kuntī's son, here the mahā-archer-Māndhātā
performed yajñas,
as did Somaka,
son of boon-granting Sahadeva.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX

1 "O mahā-Brahmin," Yudhiṣṭhira asked,
"what is the story
of the birth of Yuvanāśva's three-worlds-celebrated
tiger-among-rājās son Māndhātā?

2 I am told that he ruled
the three worlds
with mahātmā Viṣṇu's glory;
how did he achieve such greatness?

3 I am eager to know all about
the life and attainments
of that great king.
How and why was he named Māndhātā? –

4 For that is Śakra-Indra's appellation.
How was he born?
You tell stories with such skill –
tell me this story too."

5 O rājā! (Lomaśa replied),
listen carefully to how the name
of mahā-ātmaned Māndhātā
became famous the world over.

6 King Yuvanāśva was born
in the race of Ikṣvāku;
he performed many yajñas
and gave away large *dakṣiṇās.*

7 That remarkable man of dharma
performed a thousand Horse Sacrifices,
and others too
where *dakṣiṇās* were plentiful.

8 But he had no son;
so the mahā-strict-vowed, mahātmā rāja-ṛṣi
passed on the kingdom to his ministers
and retired to the forest.

9 O rājā! The mahā-ātmaned king devoted himself
to the practices
that are laid down in the śāstras.
One day, fatigued by fasting,

10 He was suffering the intense pangs of hunger;
he craved water.
It was then that he came
to Bhṛgu's āśrama.

11 That very night, the son of Bhṛgu
had performed a yajña
to obtain a son
for the son of Sudyumna, Yuvanāsva.

12 He had a large mantra-sanctified vessel
filled with water
which had the property of producing
an Indra-like son.

13 O Indra-among-rājās Yudhiṣṭhira!
Tired after their various duties at the yajñas,
the mahā-ṛṣis placed the vessel on the altar,
and slept.

14 The king's throat was parched,
and he needed water desperately.
Entering the āśrama,
he asked hoarsely for water.

15 His voice was weak and cracked,
so feeble that it sounded
like a bird's faint cackle.
No one heard him.

16 He saw the water-vessel on the altar,
and ran towards it.
Drinking it all up,
he placed it back where it was.

17 The water was sweet and cool
(continued Lomaśa),
and the king was refreshed;
his joy was boundless.

18 Cyavana and the strict-vowed munis woke up,
and all of them
noticed the water in the vessel
was missing.

19 They consulted among themselves,
enquiring about the mystery.
Yuvanāśva told them,
"I drank it. It's the truth."

20 Bhṛgu's son Bhagavān Cyavana said to him,
"O mahā-powerful and valiant rāja-ṛṣi,
this sanctified water was meant
to produce a son for you.

21 With the power of my tapasyā,
I charged the water with holiness,
in order that you may get a son.
O rāja-ṛṣi,

22 This would have given you
a brave, courageous, tapasyā-rich son,
who could have despatched
even Śakra-Indra to Yama.

23 It was for this very special purpose
that I kept
the water apart,
You have done a great wrong.

24 It is impossible to prevent
the course of events.
What you have done
must have been ordained by fate.

25 Mahārāja! Since you, out of thirst,
drank this sanctified water
which was charged with the mantras
of my deep tapasyā,

26 You will produce from your flesh
a supremely wonderful son
such as I have already described.
We will perform

27 A special yajña for you
to get you an Indra-like son.
You will not feel any pain
during the delivery."

28 One hundred years passed,
and a sun-radiant son
emerged from the left side
of the mahātmā king.

29 The radiant child emerged,
but king Yuvanāśva
did not die.
This was indeed a great wonder.

30 Mahā-refulgent Śakra-Indra came there
to see the child.
All the gods asked Indra,
"Whose breast will he suck?"

31 Śakra-Indra pushed his forefinger
in the baby's mouth;
the wielder of the thunderbolt said,
"*Mam ayam dhātā,*

32 He will suck me." So the child
Was given the name Māndhātā.

33 He sucked the forefinger of Indra,
and he grew to be
enormously strong,
and thirteen cubits tall.

34 All the sacred knowledge,
all the science of bowcraft
was acquired by the child prodigy
by his unaided intelligence.

35 The celebrated Ājagava-bow,
the arrows made of horn,
impenetrable armour –
all these he received the same day.

36 Maghavat-Śakra-Indra personally
installed him on the throne,
and he conquered the three worlds with dharma,
as Viṣṇu did with three steps.

37 Nothing could block the onward charge
of that mahā-ātmaned king's chariot.
Gems and jewels came
to that rāja-ṛṣi by themselves.

38 Ruler-of-the-earth Yudhiṣṭhira,
this is the region sacred to him:
it is wealthy, here many yajñas
of huge *dakṣiṇā* were performed.

39 That radiant and powerful monarch of dharma
constructed many religious edifices
and earned the privilege
of sitting beside Śakra-Indra.

40 He passed laws of dharma
and intelligently ruled
the city-glittering earth
and gem-glittering ocean.

41 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira! The yajña grounds
that he ordered prepared for *dakṣiṇā*-purposes
can be found in all parts
of the world.

42 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira! That mahā-ātmaned king
is said to have donated
to Brahmins
ten thousand of the finest *padma* cattle.

43 Without the help of thunder-wielding Indra,
that mahā-ātmaned ruler
ended a twelve-year drought
by causing rain to fall.

44 He killed the cloud-roaring
mahā-powerful king of Gāndhāra
of the lunar race
with his sharp arrows.

45 He sudued the four kinds of life –
gods, humans, quadrupeds, and stationary –
and the power of his tapasyā and rituals
kept the world free from all harm.

46 This is the spot
where the sun radiant king
performed yajñas to the gods.
It lies in the middle of Kurukṣetra.

47 This is the entire story
of the marvellous manner
in which Māndhātā was born,
and of his feats.

48 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira listened attentively
to the words of mahā-ṛṣi Lomaśa
(said Vaiśampāyana),
and asked him next about Somaka.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SEVEN

1 “O finest of speakers! I would like to know.”
  Yudhiṣṭhira said,
“all about the the prowess of Somaka
  and his feats.”

2 Yudhiṣṭhira! (continued Lomaśa)
  Somaka was man of great dharma.
He had one hundred wives
  all of equal status.

3 A long time passed
  and he did his best,
but he was unable to father
  a royal heir.

4 Even in his old age
  he tried every means he could
to have a son;
  finally a son, Jantu, was born.

5 O lord of the earth!
  The mothers pampered their son,
each giving him all the toys and baubles
  he wanted.

6 One day an ant bit him on his hip;
  he screamed,
for the sting was deep enough
  to be painful.

7 The mothers were equally distressed
  to see the boy stung,
and they began wailing
  as loudly as Jantu.

8 His world-ruling father was sitting
  with the royal ministers
and the family priest
  when he heard the fierce wailing.

9 He immediately sent an attendant
  to ascertain the cause:
The man came back
  with the relevant details.

10 Foe-conquering Somaka and his ministers
rose and hurried
to the women's quarters.
There, he began consoling his son.

11 Which done, he and his ministers
left the inner quarters.
He said to them
and his family priest:

12 "It's a curse having only one son!
Better to be son-less.
With diseases rampant,
one son is a problem.

13 O Brahmin! I married one hundred wives,
after close inspection,
in the hope of having sons,
but they failed me.

14 After all my efforts,
the best they could do
was give me one son, Jantu.
What a crushing blow!

15 Good Brahmin, I am now old,
so are my wives.
This one son is their life-breath to them –
and to me.

16 Is there any ritual whose performance
can get me a hundred sons?
Great or small, easy or difficult,
tell me."

17 "There is one," the *ṛtvik* replied,
"to obtain a hundred sons.
Are you prepared to perform it, Somaka?
Tell me."

18 Somaka said, "Good or bad,
if it will get me a hundred sons,
I am ready, revered one.
Tell me about it."

19 "I will do this yajña for you,"
said the *ṛtvik*,
"but you must sacrifice your son Jantu
to get a hundred sons.

20 When Jantu's fat and marrow
are offered to the gods,
your wives must inhale the smoke
to become pregnant with mahā-valiant sons.

21 Jantu will be re-born
in the womb of his mother,
and on his back
will be a golden sign."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-EIGHT

1 "Brahmin," said Somaka,
"let what must be done be done.
I want a hundred sons,
I will do as you say."

2 Somaka performed the yajña
that required Jantu
as a human sacrifice.
But the mothers dragged their son away,

3 Shouting "Hai! Hai!"
They were wild with grief,
they clutched Jantu's right hand
and sobbed piteously.

4 But the *ṛtvik* held on to his left hand.
The mothers screamed
like *kurarī* she-ospreys.
The priest pulled the boy away,

5 Killed him, and made the ritual offering
of his fat.
O descendant of Kuru
even as the fat sizzled in the fire,

6 The shrieking queens inhaled its smoke,
and collapsed
on the ground.
All those lovely ladies became pregnant.

7 After ten months had passed,
O lord of the earth,
one hundred splendid sons
were born to Somaka.

8 Jantu, born of his former mother,
was the eldest.
All the queens loved him even more
than their own sons.

9 He had a golden birthmark
on his back,
and he excelled his brothers
in almost everything.

10 After some time
the great guru of Somaka died.
A little later king Somaka
also died.

11 He saw his family priest
roasting in hell.
"Brahmin," he said, "you –
roasting like this!"

12 Continuing to roast, his guru replied,
"O rājā,
this is the fruit of my agreeing
to perform your yajña."

13 The rāja-ṛṣi immediately said
to lord-of-death Dharmarāja,
"Set him free!
This noble man is punished instead of me!

14 Throw me in hell in his place,
and let him go!
He is my guru,
I cannot let him suffer like this!"

15 The god of justice Dharma replied, "Rājā,
you cannot suffer or enjoy another's deeds.
See if you like
the fruits of your deeds."

16 "I have no desire," Somaka said,
"to go to heaven
if this Brahmin will not go with me.
O Dharmarāja,

17 I want to be where he is.
There is no difference
between my act and his –
the fruits too should be the same."

18 "Very well, O rājā," replied Dharmarāja,
"taste that wrong act's fruits
with him as long as he does,
then enter the perfect realm."

19 The lotus-eyed rājā did as told
(Lomaśa continued).
After his ill-deeds were cleansed,
he and his guru were freed.

20 The loving devotee of his guru
by his noble deed
secured for his guru all the blessings
of the perfect state.

21 This is his āśrama,
in front of our eyes.
The man who spends six self-controlled nights here
finds perfection.

22 O Indra-among-rājās Yudhiṣṭhira!
Scion of the Kurus, we must pass
six passionless, completely serene nights here.
Be prepared.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-NINE

1 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! (continued Lomaśa)
Here, in the distant past,
Prajāpati performed a yajña called Iṣṭkṛta
lasting a thousand years.

2 Nābhāga's son Ambarīṣa performed a yajña
near the Yamunā
in which he donated
ten gold *padma*-coins.

3 Son of Kuntī, he achieved
the highest success
by his yajñas and tapasyā.
This is the place where

4 The king of kings, Nahuṣa's son Yayāti,
performed his yajñas.
In his yajñas
he competed with Śakra-Indra.

5 Look at the region,
dotted with innumerable yajña-altars.
The earth seems to be sinking
under Yayāti's good karma!

6 Here is the marvellous *śami*-tree
with just one leaf.
Here is the lake of Paraśurāma
and Nārāyaṇa's āśrama.

7 This is the path traversed by Paraśurāma,
the radiantly powerful son of Ṛcīka,
when he practised yoga
on the Raupyā's banks.

8 O descendant of the Kaurava clan!
A Piśāca woman wearing pestles as ornaments,
once said to me
as I was reciting the genealogies:

9 "Eat the curd of Yugandhara!
Stay in Acyutasthala!
Bathe in Bhūtālaya!
And live with your sons!

10 Spend the first night here!
Spend the second night here!
Your deeds of daytime won't
Be your thoughts of night time!"

11 O best of the Bharatas,
great Bharata descendant, Kuntī's son!
Let us spend a night nevertheless here,
at Kurukṣetra's gate.

12 O rājā! Here Nahuṣa's son rājā Yayāti
performed yajñas
giving away gifts of gems in such abundance
that even Indra was satiated.

13 This is the excellent Plākṣāvataraṇa *tīrtha*
on the banks of the Yamunā.
Learned men say
it is the gate to heaven.

14 *Tāta*, child, after performing the Sārasvata yajña
and using the yajña-stakes
as pestles,
the great ṛṣis come here
and go through the ritual
end-of-yajña ablutions.

15 O rājā! Rājā Bharata performed yajñas here.
For the Horse-Sacrifice
he released the horse
meant for sacrifice,

16 Marked with black stripes.
He ruled the earth with the power of dharma.
O tiger-among-men,
Marut̕a, protected by Saṁvarta,

17 Performed excellent yajñas.
To bathe here is to attain all the realms,
to be purified of all crimes.
So bathe here, O Indra-among-rājās.

18 Urged and praised by the mahā-ṛṣis,
Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers bathed there.
The eldest Pāṇḍava
said to Lomaśa:

19 "O truly illustrious ṛṣi, my tapasyā-power
makes me see all the worlds!
I can also see the finest Pāṇḍava –
white-horsed Śvetavāhana Arjuna!"

20 "That is how," replied Lomaśa,
"the great ṛṣis see, O mahā-muscled hero!
There is the sacred Sarasvatī,
with adoring pilgrims.

21 O finest-of men!
Bathing in it will free you of all crimes.
The ṛṣis, divine ṛṣis and royal ṛṣis –
all performed the Sārasvata here.

22 This is the altar of Prajāpati –
five *yojanas* long on all sides –
this is the field
of the mahā-ātmaned king Kuru."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY

1 O Bharata descendant! If men die here
(Lomaśa continued), they go straight to heaven.
Thousands come here
in order to pass their last days.

2 In the distant past
Dakṣa pronounced a blessing here
during a yajña:
To die here is to find heaven.

3 Here is the divine, enchanting,
profusely-watery river Sarasvatī,
O lord of the earth, here is the *tīrtha* of Sarasvatī
called Vināśana.

4 Here is the gate of the Niṣāda kingdom:
because she disliked the Niṣādas,
the Sarasvatī hid herself here
from them.

[III:130:5-13]

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5 Here also is the Camasodbheda,
where the Sarasvatī reppeared,
and was joined
by other sacred ocean-seeking rivers.

6 Foe-chastiser, here is the sacred *tīrtha* spot
called Sindhu,
where Lopāmudrā took the ṛṣi Agastya
as husband.

7 Sun-radiant hero,
here is the *tīrtha* called Prabhāsa –
a sacred, crime-cancelling,
favourite haunt of Indra.

8 A little further is the excellent *tīrtha*
called Viṣṇupada,
Here one sees the lovely, purifying river
called Vipāśā.

9 Here, grieving over his son's death,
the bhagavān ṛṣi Vāsiṣṭha
tied and threw himself in the Vipāśā,
but he rose again.

10 O foe-chastiser Yudhiṣṭhira,
see with your brothers
the sacred territory of Kāśmīra
which mahā-ṛṣis are known to visit.

11 O Bharata descendant! A discussion took place here
between ṛṣi Kāśyapa and Agni,
and between Nahuṣa's son Yayāti
and the ṛṣis of the north.

12 Mahārāja! In the distance
you can see the Mānasa gate;
Paraśurāma split open this passage
in this hill.

13 The gate of this āśrama
constructed by truly valiant Paraśurāma
is north of Videha;
even a fierce storm cannot dislodge it.

14 O Kaunteya Yudhiṣṭhira!
There is a remarkable story regarding this place.
It is said that at yuga-end
any-form-assuming Sarva-Śiva

15 Gives darshan here with Umā
and all his followers:
in the lake nearby devotees worship
Pinākin-Śiva during the Caitra-month.

16 Sense-disciplined men of śraddhā bathe
and are cleansed of ill-deeds.
It is said that they attain the perfect realm.
No doubt of that.

17 Here is the *tīrtha* called Ujjānaka
where the bhagavān ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha
and his wife Arundhatī lived,
engaged in meditation, and attained peace.

18 A little distance from here
is lake Kuśavān
where *kuśośaya* lotuses bloom;
there is the āśrama of Rukmiṇī,
who attained peace
by controlling her anger.

19 Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
you must have heard
of the great hill of Bhṛgutuṅga –
look at it now, mahārāja.

20 O Indra-among-rājās!
Look at the river Vitastā which washes away ill-deeds;
its water is cool and clear,
and mahā-ṛṣis live near it.

21 Look at the rivers Jalā and Upajalā,
on both sides
of the Yamunā.
Uśīnara's yajña here surpassed Vāsava-Indra's.

22 O lord of the earth! O Bharata descendant!
Eager to test the character of the great Uśīnara,
Vāsava-Indra, Agni and the gods
came to his court.

23 The two boon-granting gods came
to test him.
Indra came as hawk, Agni as pigeon,
to the yajña-enclosure.

24 O rājā! The pigeon, flying from the fierce hawk;
seeking shelter,
fell in Uśīnara's lap;
it was shivering with fright.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-ONE

1 "O rājā! The world knows you as a man of dharma,"
said the hawk.
"Why do you do something
that goes completely against dharma?

2 Rājā, I am famished.
Don't take my food away from me.
You may think you're doing high dharma,
but you are not."

3 "O mahā-bird," replied the king,
"this pigeon is afraid of you;
it rushed to me
in order to escape from you.

4 Can't you see, O hawk,
that it is high dharma for me
not to surrender the pigeon
that has sought my protection?

5 See how it trembles with fear!
In desperation,
it sought my shelter.
I cannot now abandon it.

6 The man who kills a Brahmin,
the man who kills a cow, our world-mother,
the man who betrays a shelter-seeker –
all commit equal crime."

7 "O lord of the earth," replied the hawk,
"creatures must eat.
All animals need food;
without food they die.

8 A man can live for many days
without his near and dear ones,
but he cannot survive too long
without food.

9 If I don't get my food today,
I will perish, O lord of the earth.
My life-breath will desert me
and go elsewhere.

10 O man of dharma! O dharmatma! If I die,
my wife and little ones also will die.
By protecting the pigeon,
you are killing others.

11 A dharma that blocks another dharma,
is really adharma.
That dharma is true dharma
which does not harm another's dharma.

12 One should weigh one dharma against another,
O lord of the earth,
and do only the dharma
that does not harm another's dharma.

13 Weigh one dharma against another.
When in doubt, O rājā,
always choose the one
that tilts towards goodness."

14 "Brilliant bird," said the rājā,
"who speak so well,
are you the rājā-of-birds, Garuḍa?
You know all about dharma.

15 You have such varied and excellent advice
linked to dharma
that it seems there is nothing about dharma
you don't know.

16 Tell me, bird, why do you think it dharma
to desert a guest
who seeks one's protection?
You want food –

17 You can have other food surely.
I'll get you any food you like –
ox-meat, boar-meat,
venison, buffalo-meat."

18 "Mahārāja," replied the hawk,
"I don't relish
ox-meat and boar-meat.
Why should I accept other food?

19 O bull-brave Kṣatriya,
pigeon-flesh is my god-ordained food –
therefore, O lord of the earth,
give it to me.

20 Hawks eat pigeons –
this is an eternal law of nature.
O rājā! Don't climb a plantain tree
if it can't bear your weight."

21 "Sky-wanderer," the rājā replied,
"I will give you
my ancestral kingdom, all my wealth,
everything you wish,

22 With the sole exception
of this protection-seeking pigeon.
Tell me your demands,
for I will not surrender the pigeon."

23 "If you love the pigeon so much,
lord-of-men Uśīnara," the hawk said,
"cut off a portion of your flesh
and weigh it against him.

24 O finest of men,
when the scales are equally balanced,
I will gladly accept your flesh
in lieu of the pigeon."

25 The rājā said, "Hawk,
this is very kind of you.
I will give you my own flesh
in lieu of the pigeon."

26 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira (continued Lomaśa),
the dharma-inclined king
cut off his flesh and weighed it
against the pigeon.

27 The pigeon tipped the scale.
Rājā Uśīnara cut off more,
and the pigeon was still heavier –
he cut off still more.

28 He kept cutting off portions of his flesh
against the pigeon:
then he himself
stepped on to the scale.

29 "O dharma-rich king," the hawk said,
"I am Indra, and the pigeon is ghee-fed Agni.
We came to the yajña
to test your dharma.

30 You have sacrificed your own flesh
in order to save the bird –
your glory, O lord of the earth,
will be everlasting.

31 O ruler of the earth,
so long as there are men on earth
to speak of you, your glory will remain,
and you will find the eternal realm."

32 O rājā! With these words (Lomaśa said)
Indra went to heaven.
Dharmātmā Uśīnara,
filling heaven and earth with his dharma,

33 Went radiantly to heaven.
O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
in front of you is the *tīrtha*
of that mahā-ātmaned king.

34 It is sacred, it cleanses ill-deeds, O rājā.
The eternal gods and munis and humans
can be seen gathered here,
along with mahātmā Brahmins.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-TWO

1 O Indra-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira (said Lomaśa),
here is the āśrama
of the son of Uddālaka,
Śvetaketu, known
for his skill in mantras.
It is filled with pereminal fruit trees.

2 In this place Śvetaketu
had a vision of Sarasvatī,
goddess of learning.
When she appeared,
he supplicated before her,
"Give me the gift of speech."

3 In that yuga, Śvetaketu,
son of Uddālaka,
and Aṣṭāvakra,
son of Kahoḍa,
were foremost of men,
wise in the Vedas.

4 They wre uncle and nephew.
They were Brahmins
of unmatched energy.
They went to the rājā
of Videha's yajña grounds,
and beat Bandi in debate.

5 Come here, Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira,
with your brothers and worship
in the āśrama of Uddālaka,
whose grandson Aṣṭāvakra
defeated in debate in Janaka's yajña
his opponent named Bandī,

6 Who, so humiliated
by the child Aṣṭāvakra,
drowned himself in shame.

7 "Tell me," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"all about this Brahmin
who defeated Bandī.
Why was he born
Aṣṭāvakra, 'crooked
in eight parts of the body'?"

8 Uddālaka had a disciple
(said Lomasa) named Kahoḍa,
devoted to his ācārya,
so totally dedicated
that he continued his studies
for a long stretch of time.

9 Kahoḍa served his guru
with commendable zeal.
In return he was given
full knowledge of śruti;
Uddālaka bestowed on him
his daughter Sujātā.

10 The child in her womb
was refulgent like fire.
Once Kahoḍa was studying,
and the child spoke, "Father,
you have studied the whole night,
but your study is flawed.

11 Your grace has given me
the wisdom of the śāstras,
the Vedas and Vedāṅgas,
and I can tell you, father,
the words that you speak
are far from the truth."

12 Insulted in this manner
in front of his disciples,
the mahā-ṛṣi in anger
cursed the child in the womb:
"Crooked in the womb,
you will be crooked in body."

13 The mahā-ṛṣi child, born malformed
on account of the curse,
was named Aṣṭāvakra.
He had an uncle
whose name was Śvetaketu,
the same age as himself.

14 Full of anxiety
for the child in her womb,
Sujātā, wanting wealth,
approached her husband
who was without any wealth,
and said in private:

15 "O mahā-ṛṣi, I am now
ten months' pregnant.
I do not have wealth,
nor do you have money
to defray the expenses
of the child's delivery."

16 When he heard these words,
Kahoḍa went to the court
of king Janaka, where Bandi,
a Brahmin superbly
skilled in debate,
defeated and drowned him.

17 When he heard his son-in-law
was defeated in debate
and drowned by Bandi,
Uddālaka told Sujātā,
"Don't tell Aṣṭāvakra
all that has happened."

18 She kept the secret.
When the Brahmin was born,
he knew nothing.
Aṣṭāvakra considered Uddālaka
his father, and Śvetaketu
his brother.

19 When Aṣṭāvakra was twelve,
Śvetaketu saw him lying
in his father's lap;
he pulled him away;
when Aṣṭāvakra cried,
"This is not your father,"

20 Śvetaketu said. Pierced
by the words to the core
of his heart, Aṣṭāvakra
came home to his mother,
and asked sorrowfully,
"Where is my father?"

21 Deeply distressed,
and fearing his curse,
Sujātā told him all.
He listened carefully.
That night Aṣṭāvakra
said to Śvetaketu:

22 "Let us go to the splendid yajña
of rājā Janaka.
Let us go there and listen
to the debates of Brahmins,
and enjoy the delicious food
that is served.

23 There is much we can learn.
Sweet and auspicious
is the chanting of Vedas."

24 Uncle and nephew
went to the glorious yajña
of Janaka.
They encountered raja Janaka
on the path to the yajña,
and Aṣṭāvakra said:

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-THREE

1 “Till a Brahmin comes,
the right of way belongs
to the blind, the deaf,
to women, load-carriers,
and, last of all, the king.
A Brahmin has priority.”

2 “I step aside,” said Janaka,
“the path is yours:
go as you please.
The smallest fire
has power to burn;
even Indra namaskāras Brahmins.”

3 “King,” and Aṣṭāvakra,
“We have come to the yajña
out of curiosity.
We have come as guests.
Instruct your doorkeeper
to let us in.

4 Son of Indradyumna, Janaka,
we are here to witness
the yajña and meet Janaka.
The doorkeeper restrains us.
Because we are frustrated,
we burn with anger.”

5 The doorkeeper replied,
“The orders of Bandi
are explicit: No boys
are allowed to enter.
Only old and wise Brahmins
are allowed inside.”

6 “Doorkeeper,” said Aṣṭāvakra,
“if old men can enter,
then we qualify.
We are old and observe
strict vows, we shine
with the light of the Vedas.

7 We have served our elders,
subdued our passions,
increased our knowledge.
It is said even boys
should not be insulted:
the smallest fire burns."

8 "Boy," said the doorkeeper,
"recite, if you know it,
the One-yet-many-syllabled
ṛṣi-adored truth concerning
the Supreme. Do not boast.
Wise men are rare."

9 "The knots of the *śālmali* tree
do not tell its age:
body growth is not always
growth of true wisdom.
Short or slim, that tree is honoured
that bears fruits."

10 "Boys are taught by elders,"
the doorkeeper replied,
"in turn they grow old.
Knowledge comes slowly.
Why does a child like you
speak like an old man?"

11 "A man is not old
because his hairs are white,"
Aṣṭāvakra said.
"Even boys who are learned
are respected as old men
by the gods themselves.

12 No ṛṣis have declared
that the worth of a man
lies in years or white hairs,
or wealth, or friends.
The great man is he
who is wise in the Vedas.

13 Doorkeeper, I am here in the rāja-sabhā
because I wish to see Bandi.
Go and tell this to the rājā
who is garlanded with lotuses.

14 Today, doorkeeper, you will witness
a debate among the very learned;
You will see me challenge Bandī,
you will see him defeated by me.

15 Today you will see them
one by one silenced;
and learned judges and rājā
and priests will decide
if I am his superior
or his inferior."

16 "You are ten years old,"
the doorkeeper replied.
"Who will let you enter
the yajña place of the learned?
I'll do what I can.
You try too.

17 Speak to the rājā
who stands within hearing.
If you sing his praises,
he will be pleased,
and not only let you enter,
but fulfil other wishes too."

18 "O rājā," said Aṣṭāvakra,
"emperor, lord of wealth!
In the past, Yayāti
was foremost in yajñas,
but now it is you
who excels in yajña.

19 We have heard that Bandī,
routing experts in debate,
orders their deaths,
and servants in your employment
are instructed to drown
the unfortunate losers.

20 I heard this from Brahmins.
Therefore I am here
to expound on Advaita Brahman.
Where is that Bandī?
I will wipe him out
as the sun obscures the stars."

21 "Ignorant of his power,
you seek to kill Bandī,"
the rājā said, "but those
who know him keep silent.
Many Veda-knowing Brahmins
have acknowledged his power.

22 Ignorant of his might,
you seek to kill Bandī.
The Brahmins who assembled
in front of great Bandī
became stars before the sun –
bereft of their lustre.

23 *Tāta*, child, proud of their powers,
many sought to challenge him.
All returned humbled.
Silently they retired
as soon as they saw him,
without even debating."

24 "Bandī," said Aṣṭāvakra,
"never met in debate
an opponent like me.
He roars like a lion.
Today he'll collapse
like a wheel-awry cart."

25 The rājā said: "Only that man is learned
who knows the truth that has
thirty divisions, twelve parts, twenty-four joints,
three hundred and sixty spokes."

26 "May Time's ever-revolving wheel,"
said Aṣṭāvakra, "with twenty-four joints,
six naves, twelve peripheries,
and sixty spokes, protect you."

27 “Who among the gods,” the rājā asked,
“gives birth to the two
that are yoked like mares and swoop like hawks –
and to what do they give birth?”

28 “O rājā! May these two, thunder and lightning,
not fall even on an enemy’s house!
Wind-charioted cloud,
or wind-charioted mind,
gives them birth, and they give birth
to cloud or mind.”

29 “What does not close its eyes
even when asleep?
What does not move
even after it is born?
What has no heart,
and what grows as it flows?”

30 “A fish sleeps with open eyes,”
replied Aṣṭāvakra,
“an egg does not move after birth,
stone has no heart,
and a river grows as it flows,
so it is said.”

31 “You are like a god!
You are not a boy!”
the rājā said, amazed.
“You are an adult.
None equals your great learning.
Enter. Here is Bandī.”

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FOUR

1 “O rājā,” said Aṣṭāvakra,
“I cannot find Bandī
in this gathering of kings
of incomparable power.
I search for him
as for a swan in an ocean.

2 Bandi! You who consider
yourself foremost in debate!
Come, debate with me!
Dam up your eloquence!
I am like fire.
Be silent before me."

3 "Let the sleeping tiger sleep.
When you tread on a snake,
will you escape getting bit?
Here is a snake
that is slighted by your foot,
waiting, licking its fangs.

4 The weakling in pride
hits at a mountain
and hurts only himself,
his hands and his nails,"
was Bandī's reply.
"He cannot hurt a mountain."

5 "All mountains," said Aṣṭāvakra,
"are inferior to Maināka,
all calves to the ox;
all the rājās of the earth
are inferior, they say,
to the king of Mithilā.

6 As Indra among gods,
as Gaṅgā among rivers,
are you among kings,
O super-excelling Janaka.
I demand you make Bandī
appear before me."

7 O rājā (said Lomaśa),
Aṣṭāvakra said this
and, losing his temper,
shouted, "Listen, Bandī!
Answer my questions,
I'll answer yours!"

8 Bandī said:
"One is the many-formed Fire that burns,
One is the Sun that lights up the universe,
One is the hero, foe-destroying rājā of the gods Indra,
One is Yama, lord of the *pitṛs*."

9 Aṣṭāvakra said:
"Two-are the *sakhā*-friends, Agni and Indra,
Two are deva-ṛṣis, Nārada and Parvata,
Two the Aśvins, two the chariot-wheels,
Two, husband and wife divinely united."

10 Bandī said:
"Three kinds of beings result from karma,
Three the Vedas for the Vājapeya yajña,
Three the times propitious for yajñas,
Three the radiances, three the worlds."

11 Aṣṭāvakra said:
"Four are the primary goals of Brahmins,
Four are those performing yajñas,
Four the directions, four the syllables,
Four the legs of the celestial cow."

12 Bandī said:
"Five are the feet in a *paṅkti*-metre,
Five the fires, and five the yajñas,
Five are senses, five the sacred rivers,
Five the locks on the heads of apsarās."

13 Aṣṭāvakra said:
"Six cows are given as *dakṣiṇā* at a yajña,
Six seasons make the cycle of the year,
Six are the mind's qualities, six stars comprise
The constellation Krittika, six the Sādyaska yajñas."

14 Bandī said:
"Seven are the domestic animals, seven the wild,
Seven the metres used during yajñas,
Seven the ṛṣis, seven the forms of homage,
And seven the strings of the vīṇā."

15 Aṣṭāvakra said:
"Eight are the scale strings that hold a hundredfold,
Eight-footed are the lion-preying creatures, the *śarabhas,*
Eight are the Vasus among hosts of gods,
Eight are the angles of stakes in a yajña."

16 Bandī said:
"Nine mantras kindle the *pitṛ*-yajña fire,
Nine hoops make up the circle of creation
(puruṣa, prakṛti, baddhi, ahamkāra, the five elements)
Nine letters comprise the Bṛhatī metre,
Nine numbers constitute the science of mathematics."

17 Aṣṭāvakra said:
"Ten the major directions, ten times hundred
A thousand, ten months a woman's pregnancy,
Ten the conditions of the human body,
Ten kinds of revered men, ten flawed men.

18 Eleven pleasurable activities, eleven yajña-stakes,
Eleven expressious of human emotion,
Eleven Rudras among the gods of heaven.

19 Twelve are the months in a year,
Twelve letters a foot of the Yayāti metre,
Twelve are the days of the Prakṛti yajña,
Twelve the number of Ādityas in heaven."

20 Bandī said:
"Thirteen lunar days are the most auspicious,
Thirteen islands make the earth lovely . . ."
Saying this (continued Lomasa), Bandī stopped,
And Aṣṭāvakra supplied the rest of the śloka:
"Thirteen yajñas are presided by Keśī,
Thirteen syllables make many Vedic metres."

21 Sūta's son Bandī
lowered his eyes
and kept silent.
Mahā-confusion in the hall,
with everyone shouting
(continued Lomaśa).

22 Amidst that confusion
in Janaka's yajña,
the Brahmins all rose
and, approaching Aṣṭāvakra
did *añjali* before him
and paid him pūjā-homage.

23 "Having defeated the Brahmins
in debate," said Aṣṭāvakra,
"Bandi had them drowned.
Let the same dharma today
be accorded to him.
Throw him in the waters!

24 "Janaka," said Bandī,
"I am Varuṇa's son.
Concurrent with your yajña
is Varuṇa's yajña
of twelve years' duration,
where I sent select Brahmins.

25 I despatched them to Varuṇa
to witness the yajña.
They will return.
I offer
my pūjā respect
to Aṣṭāvakra,
who deserves pūjā-respect,
through whose grace today
I return to my father."

26 Aṣṭāvakra's reply was:
"With the cunning of his words
he drowned them in the waters.
With the strength of my mind
I have succeeded today
in rescuing them.

27 Agni the fire god
knows good from bad,
burns bad, spares good.
So good men can sift wisdom
even from the most
incoherent boys.

28 Janaka, have you eaten
the *ślesmātakī's* drugging fruit?
Has flattery numbed you?
My words pierce you
like the goad an elephant,
but you don't listen."

29 "I have heard your words,"
said Janaka, "I find them
excellently divine.
Your looks are divine.
You defeated Bandī,
I give him to you."

30 "King," said Aṣṭāvakra,
"what use to me
is Bandī alive?
He says his father
is Varuṇa – good!
Then drown him in the sea."

31 "I am Varuṇa's son,"
replied Bandī,
"and unafraid of the sea, O rājā.
Aṣṭāvakra, rest assured
you will soon see
your lost father Kahoḍa."

32 And instantly there rose, revived,
in front of their eyes,
all the Brahmins, pūjā-respected
by maha-atmaned Varuṇa, the sea god.

33 "This is why, O Janaka,"
said Kahoḍa,
"sons are desired:
what I failed to do, my son did.

34 It is well known, Janaka,
that weak men can have strong sons,
fools wise ones,
illiterates learned ones."

35 "May you prosper, O king,"
said Bandī;
"may Antaka-Yama's sharp axe sever
the heads of your enemies.

36 In rājā Janaka's yajña,
uktha hymns are sung,
and soma juice drunk
as ordained in the scriptures,
and the gods with delight
accept the oblations."

37 When the Brahmins rose
(continued Lomaśa),
great was their splendour.
Bandī, with Janaka's
permission, entered
the depths of the ocean.

38 Aṣṭāvakra paid pūjā-homage
to his father, and himself
was pūjā-respected by all
the Brahmins present.
He returned to his uncle
in the excellent āśrama.

39 In front of his mother,
"Go," said his father,
"and bathe in the waters
of the river Samaṅgā."
He did as instructed,
and his limbs were made straight.

40 This is the stream
known as Samaṅgā,
the defect-removing river.
Bathe in it, Yudhiṣṭhira,
with your wife and brothers,
and be cleansed of your faults.

41 O descendant of Ajamīḍha!
Brave son of Kuntī!
Pass the night here happily
with your brothers and Brahmins.
Doing good, practising bhakti,
let us go to other *tīrthas.*

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE

1 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira (continued Lomaśa),
the river you see
is the Samaṅgā, also called Madhuvilā.
Ahead of us
is the river Kardamilā,
where Bharata was anointed.

2 After Śacī's lord Indra
lost his lustre
by killing Vṛtra, he regained it
by bathing in Samaṅgā.

3 This place is Vināśana,
where Maināka is rooted
to the earth's centre.
There is the place
where Aditi, to obtain sons,
cooked the Magic Food.

4 O bull-brave Bharata,
climb this mountain-rājā Maināka
and shed your trivial
and despicable miseries.

5 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! A little further
is the great Kanakhala range,
abode of ṛṣis, and over there
is the radiant mahā-river Gaṅgā.

6 In the past, ṛṣi bhagavān Sanatkumāra
achieved fulfilment here.
If you bathe in this spot,
you will be freed of ill-deeds.

7 Kuntī's son, pay your respects –
along with your ministers –
to the Puṇya lake,
to the mountain Bhṛgutuṅga,
and to the two rivers
known as Usṇīgaṅgā.

8 Some distance away, Kuntī's son,
is the loveḷy āśrama
called Śūlaśirasa,
where anger and pride are cast away.

9 Pāṇḍu's son,
nearby is the lovely āśrama Raibhya,
where Bharadvāja's son
the learned Yavakrīta died.

10 Yudhiṣṭhira asked:
"How did Bharadvāja muni
gain yoga-excellence?
How did his son Yavakrīta die?

11 I am so delighted with these accounts
of god-like men
that I wish to know
all the details."

12 Bharadvāja and Raibhya
(continued Lomaśa)
were loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friends.
They delighted in each other's company.

13 Raibhya had two sons,
Arvāvasu and Parāvasu.
Bharadvāja had only one:
Yavakrīta.

14 Raibhya and his sons
excelled in learning,
and Bharadvāja excelled in tapasyā.
Their fame flourished.

15 O defectless Yudhiṣṭhira! Yavakrīta felt
that Brahmins respected Raibya's learning,
but were indifferent to the tapasyā
of his father.

16 He was deeply hurt by this.
He began severe tapasyā
with the goal of attaining
the wisdom of the Vedas.

17 He would expose his body
to naked flames.
This intense mahā-tapasyā began
to trouble Indra.

18 Indra went to Yavakrīta and said:
"What goal do you seek
that you practise such awesome
mortifying austerities?"

19 Yavakrīta replied:
"Adored lord of the gods,
I practise tapasyā to get for Brahmins,
without studying, the deepest Veda-wisdom.

20 Punisher of Pākā!
I must obtain Veda-wisdom.
O Kauśika Indra! With my tapasyā I must obtain
all kinds of knowledge.

21 Radiant lord! The Veda-knowledge
that gurus teach, takes too long.
That is why I am engaged
in this deep dedication."

22 "Great Brahmin ṛṣi," said Indra,
"this is the wrong way.
Do you want to destroy yourself?
Go to a guru."

23 With these words Śakra-Indra left.
Yavakrīta, practiser of profound tapasyā,
again devoted himself
to tapasyā.

24 It is said that his repeated devotion
to mahā-tapasyā
again troubled Devendra-Indra;
so I have heard.

25 Indra again approached
tapasyā-practising mahā-muni-Yavakrīta,
and ordered him
to stop his efforts.

26 He said: "You want Veda-wisdom
for all Brahmins,
without studying. This cannot be.
Only for you and your father, can it be."

27 "O rājā of the gods,"
replied Yavakrīta,
"if you refuse me,
I will practise even more severe tapasyā.

28 O rājā of the gods,
if my goal is denied,
if you should refuse me,
I will cut off my limbs
and throw them in the fire
as proof of my resolve."

29 Indra heard the firm commitment
of the mahātmā muni
(continued Lomaśa), thought deeply,
and devised a plan.

30 He assumed the disguise
of a tapasyā-practising Brahmin
hundreds of years old,
and wracked with consumption.

31 At the exact spot
where Yavakrīta would perform
his ritual ablutions,
he constructed a sand-bar.

32 Yavakrīta paid no attention whatever
to Indra,
even as Śakra-Indra began filling up
the Gaṅgā with sand.

33 Working ceaselessly,
he scooped handfuls of sand
into the Bhāgirathī-Gaṅgā,
in order to attract Yavakrīta's notice.

34 Determined-as-a-bull muni Yavakrīta,
seeing him assiduously
filling up the Gaṅgā,
laughed derisively.

35 “What’s wrong with you, Brahmin?
What is your plan?
What makes you take up
this mahā-impossible task?”

36 “*Tāta*, my child,” replied Indra,
“my plan is to build a bridge
across the Gaṅgā and make travel
easy for pilgrims,
who now have to swim across
again and again.”

37 “Listen, tapasyā-rich ascetic,” said Yavakrīta,
“you cannot bridge the Gaṅgā.
Do something that can be done,
don’t try the impossible.”

38 “I am doing this,” said Indra,
“in the same way
as you with tapasyā seek Vedā-wisdom –
an impossible task.”

39 “If, O lord of the gods, O Indra,
O chastiser of Pāka,”
said Yavakrīta,
“you consider my efforts vain, like yours,

40 Then grant me, O chief god,
that which is possible.
Grant me boons to enable me
to excel all men.”

41 Indra granted boons (Lomaśa said)
as desired by Yavakrīta.
He said, “The Vedas will shine
in you and your father.

42 All your other desires
will also be fulfilled. Go now.”
Obtaining his desires,
Yavakrīta went to his father

43 And said, “Father, *tāta,* dear father,
the Vedas will shine in you and me.
I have obtained boons
that make me super-excellent.”

44 “Son, *tāta*, dear son,” said Bharadvāja,
“because your desires are fulfilled,
you are now proud. Because of pride,
you will be ruined.

45 The gods tell an old story
to illustrate this.
In the distant past lived an illustrious muni
called Bāladhi.

46 When his son died,
he was grief-stricken,
and he performed tapasyā
to get an immortal son. He got one.

47 The gods favoured him, of course,
but they did not make his son
immortal like them,
saying no mortal can be immortal.

48 Bāladhi said, ‘O excellent gods,
a mountain lasts forever,
it is almost indestructible.
Make my son so.’

49 The son of that ṛṣi
was fire-tempered Medhāvi;
proud of his special birth,
he began insulting ṛṣis.

50 He travelled the earth over,
making fun of munis.
One day he came across the massively-learned
mahā-powerful Dhanuśākṣaka.

51 Medhāvi mocked him;
so the mahā-powerful ṛṣi cursed him
saying, ‘May you become ashes!’
But he did not become ashes!

52 Noticing this, mahā-powerful Dhanuśākṣaka
caused the mountain
to be pulverised by hordes
of battering buffaloes.

53 As soon as the mountain shattered,
Medhāvī died.
Picking up his dead son,
the ṛṣi began lamenting.

54 Let me repeat to you
the verse recited
by the Veda-learned munis
when they saw him mourning.

55 'No mortal can alter
the movement of fate:
Dhanuśākṣaka used buffaloes
to shatter a mountain.'

56 When young ascetics get boons,
they are filled with pride
and are soon ruined.
Do not follow their example.

57 My son, Raibhya is mahā-powerful –
and so are both his sons.
Approach him
with the greatest caution.

58 My son, Raibhya's a mahā-ṛṣi,
a hot-tempered ascetic.
His anger can do you
a great deal of harm."

59 "*Tāta,* dear father," replied Yavakrīta,
"I will follow your advice;
do not be anxious.
I will respect Raibhya as I do you."

60 Saying these sweet words to his father
(continued Lomaśa),
Yavakrīta went on mocking ṛṣis
and enjoying it.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SIX

1 It so happened that one day
(Lomaśa continued)
reckless Yavakrīta, in his travels,
came to Raibhya's āśrama.

2 O Bharata descendant Yudhiṣṭhira!
In that enchanting, flower-rich tree-filled āśrama
he saw Raibhya's lovely
like-a-*kinnarī* daughter-in-law.

3 He was inflamed with desire.
Without any sense of shame,
he said to her,
"Serve me."

4 Afraid, because she knew
of his strength of will,
and of Raibhya's great power,
she agreed, saying: "I will."

5 In secret she made love to him;
she concealed him.
In the meantime.
Raibhya returned to his āśrama.

6 O Yudhiṣṭhira! Seeing his daughter-in-law,
Paravasu's wife, crying,
he soothed her with sweet words,
and asked the cause,

7 And the lovely girl repeated before him
all that Yavakrīta had told her
and also how she had,
cleverly, hidden him.

8 Appalled by the misbehaviour
of Yavakrīta,
Raibhya was filled
with an uncontrollable anger.

9 Burning with rage,
  the ṛṣi ripped out a lock
of his matted hair,
  and ritually offered it in the fire.

10 Out of the fire there rose a girl,
  the double of his daughter-in-law.
He flung another lock
  in the fire.

11 This time there emerged from the flames
  a fierce-eyed rākṣasa.
Both said to Raibhya,
  "What must we do?"

12 The ṛṣi angrily told them,
  "Kill Yavakrīta."
They replied, "It will be done,"
  and left.

13 The seductive girl
  whom the mahātmā ṛṣi had created
stole the *kamaṇḍalu* water-vessel
  belonging to Yavakrīta.

14 Thus deprived of his water-vessel
  and made unclean,
Yavakrīta became the spear-wielding
  rākṣasa's target.

15 Seeing the rākṣasa rushing at him
  with uplifted spear,
Yavakrīta rose and fled
  towards a pond.

16 But the pond was dry.
  He fled to all the rivers,
but they too
  had dried up.

17 The fierce spear-brandishing rākṣasa
  continued to pursue him;
terrified, he ran to his father's
  holy-fire-worship *agnihotṛ* room.

18 There, a blind Śūdra doorkeeper
gripped him by the arm
and refused to let him enter
the room.

19 Yavakrīta stood there, blocked by the Śūdra;
at that instant,
the rākṣasa flung the spear
and pierced his heart.

20 After killing Yavakrīta,
the rākṣasa returned to Raibhya;
on Raibhya's orders,
he lived there with the lock-born girl.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SEVEN

1 Kuntī's son (Lomaśa continued),
after gathering the yajña-fuel
and performing the rituals,
Bharadvāja returned.

2 Because his son had been killed,
the sacred fire,
which normally welcomed him,
did not do so that day.

3 Bharadvāja of mahā-tapasyā noticed
the change in the *agnihotṛ*
and asked the blind Śūdra doorkeeper
who was sitting there:

4 "Śūdra, why isn't the fire
delighted to see me?
Why are you depressed too?
Is all well in the āśrama?

5 I hope my dimwitted son
did not decide to go to Raibhya.
Tell me quickly.
I fear there's trouble."

6 "Your mindless son," the Śūdra said,
"did go to Raibhya,
for which reason he lies these,
killed by a rākṣasa.

7 The rākṣasa ran at him
with an uplifted spear;
he tried to enter this room,
but I stopped him.

8 He was unclean, he wanted water,
I stopped him;
he stood paralysed,
and the rākṣasa's spear killed him."

9 Bharadvāja heard all this
from the Śūdra,
and clasped his dead son
and began to mourn.

10 "You did tapasyā
for the good of Brahmins,
you wanted the unstudied Vedas
to shine their wisdom in you.

11 You were always considerate
of the welfare of mahā-ātmaned Brahmins,
you were always gentle;
then, suddenly, you turned cruel.

12 *Tāta,* O my child, I warned you
not to go to Raibhya,
but you had to go to his Kāla-Antaka-Yama-
all-consuming āśrama.

13 That mahā-radiant ṛṣi knows
I am old,
he knows I had just one son,
yet he wickedly gave in to anger.

14 Raibhya is responsible
for my grief over your death!
My son, I will give up my life,
my most precious gift, for you!

15 Because I give up my life
out of grief for your death,
Raibhya's eldest son will kill him,
innocent though he be.

16 Blessed are they who have no children!
They will live
and never know what it is
to feel a son's death.

17 Is there anyone in this world
more criminal than he who,
maddened by his son's death,
curses his dearest friend?

18 I have seen my son dead,
and cursed my dearest *sakhā*-friend.
Can there be another man
doomed to suffer like me?"

19 Lamenting in this way
over his dead son,
Bharadvāja cremated him,
and himself stepped into the funeral pyre.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-EIGHT

1 Around this time (Lomaśa said),
the powerful mahā-fortune-favoured
Bṛhad-dyumna, who was Raibhya's *yajamāna*,
performed a yajña.

2 Raibhya's two sons,
Arvāvasu and Parāvasu,
were employed by Bṛhad-dyumna
to assist in the yajña.

3 With the permission of their father,
the two sons left.
Raibhya and Parāvasu's wife
stayed back in the āśrama.

4 Eager to see his wife,
one day Parāvasu returned alone
to the āśrama, and saw his father
dressed in black deerskin

5 In the forest; it was late night, and very dark,
he was half-drowsy,
and he mistook his father
for a beast of prey.

6 Seeking to protect himself,
Parāvasu unintentionally
killed his own father
as a result of the confusion.

7 O Bharata descendant Yudhiṣṭhira!
He performed all the sacred funeral rites
and, returning to the yajña,
said to his brother Arvāvasu.

8 "You are now not fit
to perform this yajña-ritual unassisted.
I have killed our father,
mistaking him for a beast of prey.

9 On my behalf, *tāta*, dear brother,
observe the vow that is prescribed
after Brahmin-killing,
and let me proceed with the yajña.

10 "I entrust you," said Arvāvasu,
"with Bṛhad-dyumna's yajña,
while I observe the sense-control vow
recommended after Brahmin-killing."

11 Yudhiṣṭhira! The ṛṣi Arvāvasu observed
the Brahmin-killing vow
as prescribed,
and returned to the āśrama.

12 Parāvasu saw his brother return
and was filled with delight;
with malicious joy
he said:

13 "Forbid this murderer of a Brahmin
from entering!
Do not even look at him!
Even looking will harm us! Definitely!"

14 O world-ruler, great Bharata descendant Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Lomaśa),
as soon as Bṛhad-dyumna heard this,
he ordered his men

15 To turn Arvāvasu away.
Arvāvasu heard them shout,
"Brahmin-killer!" "Brahmin-killer!"
and he cried, "It wasn't I!"

16 He did not say he had taken the vow
to absolve himself.
He said, "My brother did it,
and I protected him."

17 That Brahma-ṛṣi of mahā-tapasyā
said this in anger,
and the king's attendants would not believe him,
so he went away to the forest,

18 Where he practised severe tapasyā
and sought
the protection of the Sun.
The day-making Sun revealed

19 His undeteriorating energy to him
in his embodied form,
when propitiated by sacred chants.
The gods were pleased

20 With Arvāvasu
and appointed him chief priest of the yajña
after dismissing Parāvasu.
They gave him many boons.

21 He asked that his father
be given new life;
that his brother be freed
of the crime of parricide;

22 That Bharadvāja as well as Yavakrīta
be restored to life,
and that the Revealed Sun
illuminate the earth.

23 The gods said, "It will be so."
They granted all the boons.
O Yudhiṣṭhira, all were resurrected.
Yavakrīta said to the Agni-led gods:

24 "I did tapasyā,
I obtained all the Veda-wisdom.
How was it then that Raibhya
succeeded in killing me?

25 Tell me, gods, how is that possible?"
The gods said,
"Yavakrīta, remove this misconception
from your mind, O muni.

26 After all, you learnt the Vedas
without a guru,
much too easily;
but Raibha acquired Veda-wisdom
with great effort,
after he satisfied a guru."

27 Saying this to Yavakrīta,
the gods, led by Agni,
restored all to life,
and went heaven-wards.

28 O tiger-among-rājās Yudhiṣṭhira
in front of you
is that all-ill-deed-
cleansing āśrama
with flowering trees
and perennial fruits.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-NINE

1 Son of Kuntī, great Bharata descendant Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Lomaśa),
behind you are the Uśīrabīja, Maināka,
Śveta and Kālaśaila hills.

2 O bull-brave Bharata!
Ahead of you are the seven Gaṅgās :
this spot is radiantly holy,
Agni shines here everlastingly.

3 No human eyes can see this marvellous glory.
So close your eyes,
and focus your mind in samādhi
that you may see these *tīrthas.*

4 Kuntī's son, you have crossed
the Kālaśaila hills,
you now see the gods' playground,
marked by their feet.

5 We will now go up Mandara,
the white-rocked mountain,
where live Māṇivara Yakṣa
and Kubera the Yakṣa-lord.

6 O rājā, on this mountain
eight thousand swift-footed gandharvas,
as many Kimpurusas,
thirtytwo thousand yakṣas

7 Of all shapes
and carrying all manner of weapons,
attend on the chief of the yakṣas
called Maṇibhadra.

8 Their strength is incredible,
their speed wind-swift:
they can oust even the rājā of the gods
if they desire.

9 Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira, *tāta,*
these hills are inaccessible
because yakṣas and rākṣasas guard them;
so, focus your mind in samādhi.

10 Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira,
here are the courtiers of Kubera,
and Rudras and Maitra rākṣasas.
Prepare yourself, we have to meet them.

11 O rājā! The Kailāsa hill,
where gods dwell,
is six *yojanas* high,
and on it is the Viśālā *tīrtha.*

12 There you will find, in large numbers,
yakṣas and rākṣasas,
Kinnaras, Nāgas,
Suparṇas and gandharvas.

13 O rājā Partha-Yudhiṣṭhira!
Protected by me, and the prowess of Bhīma,
and your own tapasyā,
mix freely with them today.

14 "May rājā Varuṇa
May battle-victoriousYama
May Gaṅgā and Yamunā
May all these hills
protect you today.

15 O mahā-radiant monarch!
May the Maruts and Aśvins
May the rivers and lakes
protect you today.
May they protect you –
the Vasus
and the gods and anti-gods too.

16 Gaṅgā
Goddess of the river
Gaṅgā Devī
I hear the roaring of your voice
On this golden mountain
Sacred to Indra.
Fortune-favoured goddess
Bless on this mountain
The great lord of men
Ajamīḍha Narendra Yudhiṣṭhira.

17 Gaṅgā
O daughter of the mountains
He is about to enter these hills
Bless him and guard him."
Saying this to the ocean-going river,
the Brahmin advised Yudhiṣṭhira to be careful.

18 Yudhiṣṭhira said: "I can see
Lomaśa is troubled.
Look after Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.
Be very careful.
This place is perilous.
Practise total purity."

19 Then, turning to Bhīma,
"Attend on Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.
Be Arjuna near, *tāta*, dear brother,
or be he faraway,
Draupadī, when in distress,
always seeks your help."

20 Mahātmā rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
then said to the twins
Nakula and Sahadeva,
having smelt their heads
and caressed their bodies,
"Be careful. Do not fear."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY

1 "Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma," Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"this area is infested
with fierce invisible creatures, but our *agnihotṛ*
and our tapasyā will protect us.

2 Vṛkodra-Bhīma, gather your energies,
discipline your hunger and thirst.
Remember you are strong,
remember you are resourceful.

3 You have heard what ṛsi Lomaśa
has said about Kailāsa.
Think deeply now –
how best should Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī enter here.

4 Noble, large-eyed Bhīma,
perhaps it would be best
if you and Sahadeva and Dhaumya
and our charioteers

5 Turned back,
with the cooks, servants, chariots,
horses, and Brahmins
who are all travel-weary.

6 The mahā-tapasyā-strong ṛṣi Lomaśa,
Nakula and I
will push ahead, eating light
and disciplining ourselves.

7 Wait for my return
at the source of the Gaṅgā,
and look after Draupadī well
until I come back."

8 "Great Bharata," replied Bhīma,
"though travel-weary,
the lovely princess moves gracefully,
hoping to see white-horse-vehicled-Arjuna.

9 You also seem distressed
at not having had a glimpse
of never-retreating-from-battle
mahā-ātmaned Guḍākeśa-Arjuna.

10 Great Bharata, your distress will only increase
with Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
Sahadeva and me absent.
Let the Brahmins, servants,

11 Charioteers, cooks, and others
all return
as ordered by you.
I will not leave you alone here,

12 Lost in inaccessible hills
where rākṣasas abound.
This mahā-gracious princes,
devoted to her husbands,

13 Will not turn back unless you do the same.
O tiger-among-men!
Sahadeva here is also
devoted to you.

14 Mahārāja, I know him well –
he will never turn back
unless you do.
We are all eager

15 To see ambidextrous Savyasācī-Arjuna
so let us all go together.
If our chariots cannot cross
these rugged mountains,

16 Let us go on foot.
Do not worry, O rājā.
I will carry the Pāñcāla princess
whenever she is unable to walk.

17 Rājā! My mind's made up. No need to worry.
If these two heroes,
the gentle sons of Mādrī,
the delight of their mother,
if they weaken,
I will carry them as well."

18 "Bhīma," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"may you be stronger still
for speaking so.
You volunteer to carry the princes of Pāñcāla

19 And also the twins.
May you prosper!
Few have your courage.
May your strength, virtue and fame grow.

20 Mahā-muscled hero,
because you have undertaken
to carry our twin brothers and wife, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
may you never falter!"

21 The enchanting lady Draupadī
smiled and said,
"Noble Bharata, I am ready;
do not worry for me."

22 “Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira,” said Lomaśa,
“it is possible to go
to Gandhamādana by tapasyā;
let us practise tapasyā.

23 I am certain, O lord of the earth,
that you, Nakula,
Sahadeva, Bhīma and I will then see
white-horse-vehicled Śvetavāhana-Arjuna.”

24 Talking among themselves,
they entered with delight
the kingdom of Subāhu,
full of horses and elephants,

25 Thickly populated
by the Kirātas and Taṅganas,
as well as the Kulindas,
and visited by the gods.

26 Subāhu, king of the Pulindas,
welcomed them joyfully
and accorded them great honour
as they entered his kingdom;
pleased with their reception,
they stayed there happily,

27 Before leaving for the Himālayas
where the sun shone
radiant in the sky.
And leaving Indrasena, their servants

28 And cooks, all the valuable possessions
of Draupadī,
and everything else, in the safekeeping
of the king, the mahā-chariot-heroes,

29 Great warrior-descendants of Kuru,
continued their journey.
They moved with caution;
they had high hopes seeing Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-ONE

1 “Bhīma, princes of Pāñcāla,
twins,” said Yudhiṣṭhira
“listen to me. Let us face facts.
We have become forest-wanderers.

2 We are tired and distressed;
yet we must go on as best as we can
in the hope
that we will see Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

3 I feel his absence burning me
as fire burns a bundle of cotton.
I do not see Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
anywhere near me.

4 Thirsting to see him,
I live in the forest
with my younger brothers.
The insults to Yājñasenī-Draupadī pain me.

5 Vṛkodara-Bhīma, I see nowhere near me
Pārtha-Arjuna, Nakula’s elder,
wielder of the invincible bow.
Oh, how I suffer!

6 I have wandered in forests,
seen many charming *tīrthas* and lakes.
But not seeing Arjuna,
I suffer.

7 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma!
I have wandered with you
for five years in the hope
of seeing the great and truthful hero,
dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna.
But not seeing him, I suffer.

8 Because I cannot see
the mahā muscled, curly-haired,
lion-gaited, dark-skinned Arjuna,
I suffer.

9 Because I do not see
the greatest of the Kurus,
skilled in weapons, unmatched bowman,
I suffer, wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma.

10 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna moves among his enemies
like furious Antaka-Yama,
he has the strength
of an elephant
whose temple-juices trickle down,
his shoulder is like that of a lion;

11 Pārtha-Arjuna is no less than Sakra-Indra
in strength and prowess,
he is the elder of the twins,
he rides a white-horsed chariot;

12 He is immeasurable, invincible,
he wields the strongest bow,
he was born
under the auspicious constellation Phālguni.
Because I do not see him,
I suffer, O wolf waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma.

13 He forgives
even when his bitterest enemy
insults him.
He protects those who follow goodness.

14 But to scheming men
who mean harm to him –
even if they include
thunder-and-lightning-wielding Indra –
he is Kala the killer,
he is fatal poison.

15 Maha-powerful Bībhatsu-Arjuna
shows mercy and offers protection
even to an enemy
who has been humbled.

16 He destroys his foes in battle, he is our refuge.
He can amass all wealth, he can make us happy.

17 It was with his help that I acquired
all the wealth and precious jewels
that Suyodhana-Duryodhana
now possesses.

18 Valiant Pāṇḍava Bhīma,
it was with his help I acquired
the jewel-studded sabhā-hall
celebrated in the three worlds.

19 He is brave like Vāsudeva-Krishna,
he is like Kārtavīrya in battle,
without an equal.
I do not see Phālguna-Arjuna now.

20 Foe-chasting Arjuna
is equal in prowess
to Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma,
and to invincible Vāsudeva-Krishna.

21 He equals Puraṁdara-Indra in valour,
the wind god Vāyu in speed,
the moon god Soma in beauty,
and Eternal Death in anger.

22 Mahā-armed one, let us all go
to the Gandhamādana mountain
in order to see
that heroic tiger-among-men.

23 That excellent mountain has the āśrama
of Nara-Nārāyaṇa,
and on it is the *badari* tree;
yakṣas live there.

24 Practising mahā-tapasyā, we shall journey there,
to the lovely lake of Kubera guarded by rākṣasas.

25 No vehicle can go there.
Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
no cruel, greedy and restless human
can find it.

26 Bhīma! In order to find Arjuna,
we shall depend on our swords and bows;
mahā-strict-vowed Brahmins
will go with us.

27 Pārtha-Bhīma, indisciplined men
encounter flies, gnats,
mosquitoes, tigers, lions, reptiles there.
Disciplined men find none.

28 So discipline your palate
and control your passions,
and let us go to Gandhamādana
to meet Dhanañjaya-Arjuna."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-TWO

1 “You have seen (Lomaśa continued)
mountains, rivers, cities,
forests, and lovely *tīrthas*
whose holy waters you have touched.

2 Sons of Pāṇḍu, this is the way
to the celestial Mandara mountain:
be on the alert and free your minds
of all worries.

3 For this is the abode of the gods,
and of all
the divine ṛṣis
famed for their virtuous karma.

4 O rājā! In this region flows
the mahā-river of enchantment,
whose sacred ṛṣi-adored waters
originate near the *badari* tree.

5 It is worshipped by the mahā-ātmaned
sky-ranging Vālakhilyas,
and the mahā-ātmaned gandharvas
also pay homage to it.

6 The singers of the Sāma-Veda,
Marīci, Pulaha, Bhṛgu and Aṅgiras
chant sweet and pure songs
in this region.

7 The chief of the gods Indra
and the Maruts
perform daily *japa*-prayers here,
attended by the Siddhas and Aśvins.

8 The Moon, the Sun, the Stars
and the Planets
attend on this holy river
day and night.

9 O mahā-fortune-favoured one!
World-protecting Śiva received on his head
the waters of this river
at the source of the Gaṅgā.

10 *Tāta*! Child, come before this goddess,
Gaṅgā-Bhagavatī Devī, all of you,
and focus all your energies
and bow down before her."

11 The Pāṇḍavas listened to the words
of mahā-ātmaned Lomaśa
and paid homage to the river
which flows from the sky.

12 After they had shown reverence,
the dharma-cherishing Pāṇḍavas,
accompanied by the ṛṣis,
happily proceeded on their mission.

13 From a distance they noticed
an enormous white shape
which they surmised
was the all encompassing mountain Meru.

14 Eloquent Lomaśa, noticing
the eager curiosity of the Pāṇḍavas,
said to them,
"Listen, sons of Pāṇḍu!

15 Foremost among men,
the sight you see before you –
awesome in proportions
like a mountain, and

16 As breathtaking as Kailāsa –
are the bones of the mahā-ātmaned
Daitya anti-god Naraka,
heaped like a huge hill.

17 A long time ago, this anti-god was killed
by supreme-ātmaned Paramātmā Viṣṇu
the eternal deity,
for the protection of Indra, the rājā of the gods.

18 That mahā-minded anti-god
performed tapasyā
for a thousand years
in order to obtain Indra's kingdom.

19 And he became incomparable in strength
though tapasyā,
and he began harassing
the king of the gods.

20 O defectless one, Śakra-Indra was troubled.
Fear unnerved him
whenever he heard of the anti-god's tapasyā
and strict observance of dharma.

21 He invoked the undeteriorating divinity Viṣṇu,
and the auspicious lord of the universe
graced Indra
with his presence.

22 The ṛṣis and gods stood by,
in prayerful adoration.
In front of the dazzling presence
of the supreme divinity, even Havyavāna-

23 Agni pales into nothing.
Seeing the divine boon-giver –
the divinity Viṣṇu –
the lord of the gods

24 Thunder-wielding Indra namaskāra-ed him
with palms joined in *añjali*
and bowed head,
and confessed the cause of his fear.

25 'Indra,' said Viṣṇu,
'I know you fear Naraka,
lord of the Daitya anti-gods,
who with tapasyā desires your kingdom.

26 O lord of the gods Devendra,
though he is successful in tapasyā,
I will destroy him for your good.
Wait.'

27 Viṣṇu struck Naraka with mahā-force;
Naraka fell down unconscious;
he fell down dead,
and lay like a massive mountain.

28 Destroyed by this māyā, he lay there,
his bones were collected at this spot –
you see here
the feat of Viṣṇu's.

29 Once, in fact, the whole earth was lost –
it sank into the Pātāla nether regions.
But Viṣṇu as single-tusked boar
lifted her up."

30 Yudhiṣṭhira asked, "How did Viṣṇu lift up this earth?
Bhagavan, revered one,
tell me the entire story in detail.
This hundred-*yojana* deep-sunk earth,

31 This magnificent support
of all creatures –
this bountiful, blessing-dispensing earth –
how did it get lifted up by Viṣṇu?

32 How did it happen that this mahā-fortune-favoured
support of all creatures
sank one hundred *yojanas*
inside the nether regions?

33 Tell me all that happened, O finest of Brahmins.
Describe to me
these marvellous feats of Paramātmā-Viṣṇu.
You know all about them."

34 Yudhiṣṭhira (replied Lomaśa),
I will narrate the story
in exact detail,
since you ask me to.

35 *Tāta,* child, long ago, in a fearful period
in the Tretā Yuga,
the Primal Divinity performed
the duties of Yama.

36 And because the all-wise God of gods
performed the god of death's duties,
death ceased on earth;
births multiplied.

37 Birds and heasts, cattle and sheep,
and deer
and all kinds of wild animals
multiplied profusely.

38 O tiger-among-men, foe-chastiser!
Humans multiplied too,
in thousands and tens of thousands,
like raindrops.

39 *Tāta!* Child! As a result of the alarming
proliferation of creatures,
the earth sank a full
hundred *yojanas.*

40 Wracked by pain, and half-delirious
because of the weight
pressing on her,
she appealed to the Supreme Divinity Nārāyaṇa:

41 "Bhagavan! Revered one!
By your grace I was stable.
Now I am oppressed,
I cannot keep my equilibrium.

42 Help me in my distress,
Bhagavan! Revered one!
I seek your refuge.
Help me, be kind to me, O Radiant One!"

43 Undecaying Bhagavan Nārāyaṇa heard
the plea of Earth,
and spoke slowly these words
of gracious sweetness:

44 "Treasure-rich Earth,
Suffering Earth,
Do not fear.
I will protect you,
I will find a way."

45 He sent away Earth,
lady who has hills for ear-rings,
and transformed himself
into a mahā-radiant one-tusked boar.

46 O valiant Yudhiṣṭhira!
His red eyes blazed
    fiercely,
His body seemed
    to emit smoke,
His body began swelling
    enormously.

47 The Deity stuck Earth
    on that single tusk
and lifted her up
    one hundred *yojanas.*

48 Commotion everywhere!
    As Earth rose,
all the gods and tapasyā-rich ṛṣis
    expressed agitation.

49 The earth, the sky, the heavens
    resounded with cries of *Hai! Hai!*
Neither gods nor men
    had peace of mind.

50 So the ṛṣis and the gods
    went to Brahmā
who was seated in the glory
    of his own radiance.

51 Approaching the lord-god Deveśa-Brahmā
    who witnesses
the actions of all,
    they did *añjali* and said:

52 "Lord, all the world is in turmoil,
    all moving and unmoving creatures,
all oceans,
    agitated.

53 The Earth has fallen one hundred *yojanas* –
    she is devastated –
why? who has done this?
    Tell us, we are all amazed."

54 “Immortal ones, gods,” replied Brahmā,
“the anti-gods are not responsible for this.
Let me explain the cause
of all this commotion.

55 The Undecaying, Omnipresent,
Eternal, Shining Essence
Śrīmān Ātman of the universe
has created this tremendous agitation.

56 Paramātmā Viṣṇu
has lifted up Earth
which dropped one hundred *yojanas*
under pressure.

57 And all this turmoil is the result
of his chaos her up.
That is the reason,
so do not tremble.”

58 “Bhagavan, revered one,” said the gods,
“where is the Divinity
who so effortlessly raises up Earth?
We will go to him.”

59 “Go there,” replied Brahmā, “with my blessings.
You will find him in Nandana.
Here is shining, lovely-feathered,
adorable Bhagavān Śrīmān Garuḍa.

60 After raising Earth,
the Supreme Creator of the worlds
shines in boar-shape, like the fires of Kāla
burning at the end of the worlds.

61 On his chest
is the dazzling jewel Śrīvatsa.
Go and see him
who is beyond decay and decline.”

62 The gods, led by Pitāmaha Brahmā
had darshan of Mahātmā Viṣṇu,
heard his praises,
and returned.

63 O Janamejaya (Vaiśampāyana said),
the Pāṇḍavas listened to this story,
and hastened on,
as directed by Lomaśa.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-THREE

1 The greatest of bowmen (said Vaiśampāyana)
the shining heroes,
carrying full quivers,
armed with swords,

2 With tautly-strung bows,
wearing iguana-skin finger-guards,
proceeded to Gandhamādana with Draupadī,
the Brahmins leading.

3 They saw lakes and rivers,
and mountains,
and forests with massive trees on their summits
spreading shade everywhere.

4 They saw perennially fruiting
and flowering trees,
and deva-ṛṣi-inhabited regions
Disciplining the ātman with the Ātman,

5 They made their way
through craggy, rocky terrain;
all along they saw
hosts of wild animals.

6 The mahā-ātmaned heroes finally came
to the mountain
inhabited by ṛṣis, Siddhas, gods, and visited
by gandharvas, Kinnaras and apsarās.

7 As the heroes approached
Gandhamādana mountain,
a tumultuous wind began blowing,
accompanied by gusty showers.

8 Swirls of cloud-dust rose,
dry leaves scattered
and darkened
the earth, the air, and the sky.

9 Nothing was visible;
the sky was a welter of dust.
The Pāṇḍavas were unable
even to speak to each other.

10 O Bharata descendant Yudhiṣṭhira!
Groping in the dark, buffeted by the gritty wind
blowing in their eyes,
they could not even see each other.

11 The trees made weird sounds,
some as they shook,
others as they were uprooted,
others as they crashed down.

12 Wind-shaken, the Pāṇḍavas thought:
Are the heavens falling,
is the earth breaking apart,
the mountain sundering?

13 Alarmed by the wind-blasts,
they felt their way with their hands,
taking shelter
near trees, ant-hills, and caves.

14 Mahā-powerful Bhīma gripped his bow firmly,
took Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī by the hand,
and sought protection
under a large tree.

15 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira and Dhaumya
slipped into a large wooded region;
Sahadeva, guarding the *agnihotṛ*,
took cover behind a rock.

16 Nakula, Lomaśa
and other tapasyā-rich Brahmins,
in great fear –
each sought the safety of a tree.

17 The wind died down
and the dust-storm subsided;
but suddenly there fell on them
a deluge of rain.

18 And a tremendous noise rose,
caṭa-caṭā, like that of thunder;
flashes of lightning lit up
the grey clouds.

19 The rushing wind carried
the sheets of rain swiftly
everywhere, unceasingly,
flooding the area.

20 O lord of the earth!
Runnels of rain gurgled down the slopes,
churning everything
into a muddy, frothy chaos.

21 And larger channels of water
bore down swiftly,
in massive volume,
boisterously uprooting trees.

22 When silence returned
with the abating of wind,
and the waters subsided
and the day-maker sun shone,

23 The Pāṇḍavas cautiously emerged and met together;
then, O Bharata-descendant,
the brave heroes proceeded towards
the Gandhamādana-mountain.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR

1 The mahātmā Pāṇḍavas had gone hardly two miles
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
when Draupadī, unused to walking,
suddenly sat down.

2 She was tired and depressed;
the storm and the rain
had completely exhausted
the lovely Pāñcāla princess Draupadī.

3 Trembling with weakness,
the black-eyed lady
tried to support herself on her thighs
with her gracefully-shaped arms.

4 Trying to support herself by clasping
her elephant-trunk-graceful thighs,
she slipped and fell
like a plantain tree.

5 Seeing the lovely-thighed lady fall
like a drooping creeper,
strong Nakula rushed forward
and tried to help her up.

6 "O rājā, great Bharata," said Nakula,
"look, the black-eyed,
tired daughter of the rājā of Pāñcāla
has fallen on the ground!

7 Mahārāja, this graceful-gaited lady
deserves no sorrow,
yet is sorely afflicted!
She is tired out. Console her."

8 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma and Sahadeva
heard Nakula, and,
agitated, rushed to her side
to comfort her.

9 The dharmātmā son of Kuntī, Yudhiṣṭhira
saw her pale and distraught face,
placed her head
on his lap, and grieved.

10 "Why should this lovely-complexioned lady,"
Yudhiṣṭhira lamented,
"used to the comfort of private beds,
have to sleep on the ground?

11 The soft hands and lotus-feet
of this lovely lady,
deserving the finest cosmetics,
are dark-blue today – all my fault!

12 My obsession with dice is the cause
of all this!
I am reduced to seeing Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
in an animal-infested forest!

13 Rājā Drupada bestowed on us
his large-eyed daughter, saying,
'My auspicious daughter, find happiness
with your Pāṇḍava husbands.'

14 And now, broken down
with the rigours of sorrow and travel –
all my fault! –
she lies unhappy on the ground."

15 While Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
lamented in this fashion,
Dhaumya and other celebrated Brahmins
approached him.

16 They consoled him and they blessed him,
uttering mantras
capable of destroying rākṣasas,
and performed various rites.

17 After mantras had been chanted
by the great ṛṣis in order to revive her,
after the cool caresses
of the Pāṇḍava's hands,

18 After she had been fanned
by the moisture-filled breeze,
the Pāñcāla princess, refreshed,
slowly returned to her senses.

19 They placed exhausted Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
who had regained consciousness,
on a deer-skin, and advised her
to take complete rest.

20 The twins, with bowstring-scarred hands,
began massaging gently
her red-soled feet
graced by all the auspicious signs.

21 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira made special efforts
to console her.
Having done so, the foremost of the Kauravas
said to Bhīma:

22 "Bhīma, ahead of us
is the snow-topped, precipitous mountain.
O mahā-muscled one,
how will Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī manage?"

23 "O rājā," replied Bhīma, "O bull-brave Bhārata!
It will be my duty to carry
the princess, the twins, and you;
so do not worry, O Indra-among-rājās.

24 O defectless one, if you order it,
the son of Hiḍimbā,
sky-ranging Ghaṭotkaca, as mahā-valiant as me,
will carry us all."

25 Ordered by Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bhīma mentally summoned
his rākṣasa son;
immediately dharmātma Ghaṭotkaca appeared.

26 The mahā-powerful hero greeted
the Pāṇḍavas and Brahmins,
and did *añjali* before them;
they welcomed him warmly.

27 He turned and said
to his mahā-powerful father Bhīma:
"Because you remembered me,
I am come here to serve you.

28 O mighty-armed hero, command me.
I will do whatever you order me."
Bhīma heard this,
and embraced the rākṣasa.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FIVE

1 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "Bhīma, let your own son,
this dharma-wise bhakta,
devoted-to-us bull-brave rākṣasa
carry his mother Draupadī.

2 O hero of tremendous valour!
Your prowess, Bhīma,
will today take me and the Pāñcāla princess
to Gandhamādana."

3 Bhīma listened to his brother
(said Vaiśampāyana),
and said to the great foe-chastiser
Ghaṭotkaca;

4 "Invincible hero, son of Hiḍimbā,
tāta, my son, sky-wanderer,
you can go wherever you wish.
Your mother here
is tired out with travelling.
Hero, lift her

5 On your shoulder, and accompany us
straight ahead,
and see that she feels no discomfort.
Take my blessings."

6 Ghaṭotkaca said, "I can singly
carry Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
Dhaumya, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, and the twins.
Today I have others
to assist me, so I shall have
no difficulty at all.

7 Besides, there are hundreds
other heroic rākṣasas,
who range the skies
and assume what shapes they wish –
these also will help you carry
all your followers."

8 Saying this, Ghaṭotkaca stooped
and picked up Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.
Other rākṣasas did the same
with the Pāṇḍavas.

9 Incomparably radiant Lomaśa,
like a second sun,
moved along the path
taken by the Siddhas.

10 Ordered by the Indra-of-rākṣasas Ghaṭotkaca,
various other rākṣasas
placed the Brahmins on their shoulders,
and proceeded forward.

11 They passed many enchanting
woods and forests,
moving in procession
towards the great jujube tree.

12 Because they were transported
by swift, mahā-energetic rākṣasas,
they covered the long distance
in a very short time.

13 They passed through many territories
crowded with *mleccha* tribes,
many diamond mines,
hill-ranges rich with minerals,

14 Where Vidyādharas lived,
and everywhere flocked *vānara* tree-men,
Kinnaras, Kimpurusas,
and gandharvas.

15 They saw peacocks abounding,
camarī-cows,
monkeys, *ruru*-deer, boars, buffaloes,
and *gavaya*-oxen

16 In lands criss-crossed by rivers,
where large flocks of birds lived,
along with beasts,
including huge elephants,

17 Where lush trees attracted
the song-trilling birds.
They crossed many such lands,
including Uttara-kuru,

18 Where they had a glimpse
of the lord of mountains,
enchanting Kailasa. There they saw
the Nara-Nārāyaṇa ashram,

19 Adorned with exquisite divine trees
bearing perennial fruits and flowers.
Then they came
to the large-trunked jujube,

20 Fresh, thickly shady, the *badari* tree
of absolute beauty,
with dense, soft green leaves,
salubrious, auspicious,

21 With lustrous gigantic boughs
that spread far out;
it had fully-ripe, delicious,
sanctified fruits,

22 Dripping honey.
Many mahā-ṛṣis lived there,
and everywhere in it flew birds
intoxicated with joy and freedom.

23 No gnats and mosquitoes here.
Plentiful supply of water,
roots, fruits, grass;
visited by gods and gandharvas.

24 It grew on a smooth stretch
of salubrious, auspicious land,
without scrub, lovely and cool
and pleasant to the touch.

25 Reaching this place
with their hosts of Brahmin followers,
the Pāṇḍavas alighted
from the rākṣasas' shoulders.

26 O rājā Janamejaya! The Pāṇḍavas,
accompanied by the excellent Brahmins,
saw the heart-charming āshram
of Nara-Nārāyaṇa.

27 No darkness here; no scorching sun's rays
beat down here;
no hunger, thirst, hot or cold –
a holy sorrow-killing āshram.

28 Mahārāja! Mahā-ṛṣis crowded the place,
the Vedas graced it;
this āshram was inaccessible
to those without dharma.

29 It was radiant with *homas*
and holy offerings,
it was well-swept, fragrant;
celestial flowers gave it great beauty.

30 It was full of yajña altars,
with sacred ladles and posts;
everywhere one saw
water-jars and caskets.

31 It was the refuge of all.
It echoed with Veda-recitations,
a fatigue-destroying,
holy āshram.

32 It was full of glory,
it brought incomparable merits,
it was sublime,
it had divine lustre.
Root-and-fruit-subsisting mahā-ṛṣis
lived in it,

33 Controlling their senses,
wearing black deer-skin,
shining like Vaiśvānara-Agni or the sun,
with tapasyā-rich souls,

34 And minds intent on mokṣa;
these Brahman-knowers had renounced pleasures
and focused their mahā-radiance
on a life of purity.

[III:145:35-43]

Transcreated by P. Lal

35 Yudhiṣṭhira, shining son of Dharma,
and his brothers,
disciplining their senses,
approached these mahā-ṛṣis,
who, having divine premonition
of their arrival,

36 Welcomed them joyfully.
Reciting from the Vedas,
the ṛṣis blessed Yudhiṣṭhira
and his followers.

37 The fire-like ṛṣis gave them
a loving ritual reception,
offering them fresh water, fruits,
flowers and roots,

38 Which Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
gratefully accepted
with disciplined mind
from the hands of the mahā-ṛṣis.

39 That heavenly āshram,
which was like Śakra-Indra's abode,
filled with celestial fragrance,
was entered by Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,

40 O defectless Janamejaya,
with Yudhiṣṭhira, his brothers
and thousands of excellent Brahmins,
learned in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas.

41 Pure-minded Yudhiṣṭhira saw
the āshram of Nara-Nārāyaṇa
adored by gods,
made lovely by the Bhāgīrathī river.

42 Seeing the Brahmin ṛṣis there,
and the honey-dripping fruits,
the tigers-among-men Pāṇḍavas
were filled with joy.

43 The mahā-ātmaned visitors stayed there
are guests
of the āshram inmates.
They passed their days happily.

44 They saw the golden-peaked
Maīnāka mountain
and the bird-filled, holy lake
of Bindusara.

45 They roamed in the woods
with Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
spellbound at the glorious variety
of blossoming trees.

46 Brown flowers, russet blossoms
on the thick boughs,
already bent with fruit,
with numerous male *kokilas*,

47 Glittering with glossy plumage;
cool shadows everywhere,
and the breathtaking loveliness
of clear-water lakes

48 Dotted with lotuses and lilies . . .
So entrancing
was the scene that the Pāṇḍavas
stood still and marvelled.

49 A soft, scented, soothing breeze seemed
always to be blowing there,
bringing pleasure
to the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī.

50 The cool-watered, soft-flowing Bhāgīrathī,
lovely lotuses everywhere,
stairs made of ruby
and coral,

51 Trees that scattered divine flowers
and haunted the mind –
all this the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas
saw near the massive jujube tree.

52 Purifying themselves in the sacred waters
of the Bhāgīrathī,
and offering oblations in that inaccessible land
of deva-ṛṣis,

53 The perpetuators of the Kaurava dynasty
performed their ritual duties
and spent their time
reciting holy texts.

54 The greatest of men,
the bull-brave Pāṇḍava heroes
lived there among the Brahmins.
The tigers-among-men Pāṇḍavas,
seeing all these sights with Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
were overjoyed.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SIX

1 Those tigers-among-men spent
six nights there,
living purely, hoping to see
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna in person.

2 One day there blew a wind
from the north-east,
carrying a divine, thousand-petalled,
sun-like lotus.

3 The princess of Pāñcāla saw
that divinely-scented,
exquisite, wind-wafted lotus
lying on the ground.

4 O rājā Janamejaya!
She picked up the holy and fragrant lotus,
she was thrilled,
and she said to Bhīma:

5 "Bhīma, look at this absolutely exquisite,
this divine flower:
its sweet fragrance
has stolen my heart.

6 O foe-crushing hero!
I will give it to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
Do get me some more like it,
to take to the Kāmyaka āshram.

7 Prthā-Kuntī's son, if you love me,
then get me many more like it.
I want to take them
to the Kāmyaka āshram."

8 Saying this to Bhīma,
the lovely-eyed lady took the flower
and went to show it
to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

9 Knowing what she longing
bull-brave mahā-powerful Bhīma
set out to gratify the desire
of his loved one.

10 Eager to get the lotuses,
he strode rapidly,
facing the direction from which
the lotus had wafted over.

11 He took his gold-inlaid bow
and snake-like arrows,
and strutted like an angry lion
or a rutting elephant.

12 Creatures stopped and inability,
at the great bow-wielder.
Neither exhaustion, nor inability,
nor fear, nor confusion

13 Ever hampered
the son of Pṛthā-Kuntī and Vāyu.
Eager to please Draupadī,
that hero with massive arms,

14 Tireless and fearless,
began climbing the mountain.
The great foe-slayer wandered
all over the slopes

15 Of black stone,
lovely with creepers and shrubs;
Kinnaras lived there;
minerals, beasts, birds, colours

16 Made the place enchanting –
it looked like an arm upraised,
glittering with jewels.
Incomparable hero Bhīma,

17 Intent on his goal
on the Gandhamādana
which was adorned with flowers,
kept looking around him;

18 His eyes, ears and mind
were focused on the spots
where the songs of kokilas echoed,
where black bees hummed;

19 He pushed on like a rutting elephant,
inhaling the fragile fragrances
from the hosts of flowers.
Breezes

20 From the Gandhamādana fanned him –
they were feather-soft, flower-fragrant.
His wind-god father removed his tiredness,
his body-hair horripilated.

21 Foe-crushing Bhīma searched for the flowers
everywhere on the mountain
frequented by yakṣas,
gods, Brahmā-ṛṣis and gandharvas.

22 Brushed by the seven-leafed tree,
streaked with red,
black and white mineral-colours,
he looked as if daubed
with sacred finger-paint.
And the mountain,
with clouds on both sides,
appeared to dance with outspread hands.

23 The brooks trickling down its slopes
looked like pearl necklaces.
There were groves,
waterfalls, and caves.

24 Peacocks danced in tune
to the jingling of bangles
on apsaras' arms.
Elephants' tusks had worn smooth
the rough, rocky surface
of parts of the mountain.

25 The filmy cataracts
were like loose dresses
flapping in the wind.
Pushing aside the numerous creepers,

26 While stags stared at him
with half-chewed cud,
not scampering, away
for they had no knowledge of fear,

27 And eager to fulfil the desire
of his beloved,
the handsome-eyed hero, Vāyu's son,
Śrīmān Bhīma pushed steadily on.

28 His skin was the colour of gold,
his figure was leonine,
he walked with the vigour
of a musth elephant;

29 His eyes were copper-coloured
like an intoxicated elephant's.
He roamed on the slopes,
looking up with large eyes

30 Of striking beauty.
The wives of yakṣas and gandharvas,
sitting invisible
beside their husbands,

31 Turned and looked at him.
He remembered
the insults and humiliations
caused by Duryodhana,

32 And was all the more eager
to please exiled Draupadī.
He thought: *With Arjuna visiting heaven,*
and I gone.

33 *In search of flowers,*
what will Yudhiṣṭhira do?
Unsure of their prowess,
he will not allow the twins

34 *Nakula and Sahadeva to come in search of me.*
It is important
that I get the flowers soon.
With these thoughts,

35 That tiger-among-men Bhīma
sped with the swiftness of the rājā-of-birds Garuḍa,
his mind and sight
fixed on the mountain.

36 The request of Draupadī
was his sustenance for the journey
as he advanced,
shaking the earth like a storm.

37 Mahā-powerful wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma frightened
the herds of elephants,
the lions, tigers, and deer,
tearing aside plants and creepers

38 As would an elephant,
ascending higher
and still higher
to the mountain top;

39 Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma moved on,
grunting fearfully,
as lightning charged clouds do.
Woken by his noisy panting,

40 Tigers emerged from their caves,
and other animals hid inside them.
Birds screamed,
deer skittered away wildly,

41 Bears scattered in fear,
lions left their dens,
tigers woke from slumber,
and huge buffaloes stared from a distance;

42 The elephants, alarmed,
left the mahā-forest,
surrounded by the females of the herd,
and sought shelter in another forest.

43 Boars, deer, lions, buffaloes,
tigers, jackals,
gavaya-oxen, and other wild beasts
roared and shouted.

44 Gallinules, ducks, *haṁsas,*
kāraṇḍavas, plavas, parakeets,
male kokilas and *krauñca*-herons
scattered confusedly.

45 Proud elephants,
instigated by their females,
and some lions and tigers
fiercely confronted Bhīma.

46 Bewildered and terrified,
some animals discharged urine and dung,
and wailed piteously
with gaping mouths.

47 The noble, handsome son of Vāyu
the wind-god,
single-handed killed many elephants
and many lions.

48 Smaller beasts Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma
simply slapped dead.
The remaining lions, tigers,
and leopards

49 Set up a common commotion,
urinating
and excreting out of fear.
The mahā-powerful hero,

50 Entered that forest
echoing with the noise of his shouting.
Pāṇḍu's handsome Brahmā-powerful son saw
on Gandhamādana's slopes

51 A full forest of plantain trees
stretching for many *yojanas.*
The mahā-powerful hero
ran swiftly towards it,

52 As would an elephant uprooting
and smashing down plantain trees,
each as high as
many palm-trees together.

53 The incredibly mahā-energetic Bhīma
tore them apart
and scattered them;
with leonine pride, he shouted loudly.

54 He saw around him
various huge animals,
and monkeys, deer, lions, buffaloes,
and water-creatures too.

55 The screaming and roaring of these animals,
mingled with Bhīma's shouts,
startled even creatures
in distant forests.

56 The noise was so tremendous
that thousands
of wet-winged waterfowl, startled,
scattered in the sky.

57 Bhīma, bull-brave Bharata,
followed in their direction,
and came to a large,
enchanting lake.

58 A fathomless lake!
Golden plantain trees waved
on its banks, their leaves quivering
in the gentle breeze.

59 He entered
the lotus-and-lily-full waters,
and splashed about happily,
like a huge rutting elephant.

60 He enjoyed himself for a long time,
then the radiant hero
strode quickly
into the tree-thick forest.

61 Powerful Pāṇḍava Bhīma blew with all his strength
on his conch;
he slapped his arm-muscles,
till the heavens reverberated.

62 The blare of the conch,
the shouts of Bhīma,
and the slapping of his arms,
made the mountain caves shake.

63 The lions asleep in these caves
heard the horrific mahā-noise
of thunder-sounding arm-slaps,
and began growling.

64 Alarmed by the howling of the lions,
the elephants sent up
their own mountain-shaking
mahā-fierce trumpeting.

65 Hearing all these fierce sounds,
and guessing that
it must be Bhīma his brother,
the monkey-lord Hanumān,

66 Desiring to help Bhīma
in every way possible,
and wishing Bhīma's safety,
devised a plan

67 Of obstructing the path to heaven.
He stretched himself
full length on the narrow path
between the plantain trees,

68 His aim being to prevent Pāṇḍava-Bhīma
from inviting any curse
of encountering failure
by rushing headlong

69 Into the forest of plantains.
So the mahā-bodied *vānara* Hanumān
seemed to relax there,
as if drowsy,

70 And he began to yawn,
lashing his massive tail,
which resembled a yajña-pole of Śākra-Indra's.
He snored like thunder,

71 And the long cow-mooing sound
seemed to penetrate
the mouths of caves,
and echo out of them magnified.

72 The powerful lashing of his tail
weakened the mahā-mountain-rocks,
and some toppled down
in fragments.

73 Louder than the trumpetings
of musth elephants,
the thudding of his tail-lashings
spread alarm everywhere.

74 Bhīma heard the noise,
and his body-hair horripilated;
he began to search for the source
of these eerie sounds.

75 The mahā-muscled hero stumbled
on the *vānara*-lord
in the plantain forest,
supine on a small rock-elevation.

76 Difficult to look at him,
as difficult as to look
at a lightning flash –
copper-coloured, lightning-bright,

77 Short, fleshy neck
below his heavy shoulders,
and a slender waist in comparison
to his body's bulk.

78 His tail, slightly curved at the end
and thickly covered with hair,
was erect
like a banner.

79 Bhīma noticed that Hanuman's mouth
was small-lipped,
his face burnished like copper,
his tongue long,

80 He had red ears, quick-moving eyes,
head like a hair-haloed moon,
and white,
edge-sharp teeth.

81 He lay there,
his mane a mass of aśoka flowers,
radiantly shining among
the golden plantain trees

82 Like a blazing fire – his whole body
seemed all aflame.
He glanced right and left
with honey-pink eyes.

83 Bhīma saw the mahā-powerful
large bodied *vānara*-lord,
like the Himālayas themselves,
blocking the path to heaven.

84 Mahā-muscled Bhīma saw him stretched out
alone and unafraid
in the mahā-plantain-forest,
crept up to his side,

85 And quickly roared like an angry lion:
all the birds and beasts;
terrified,
scattered and fled.

86 Mahā-patient Hanumān opened his honey-pink eyes
partially, casually,
looking a little upset;
be smiled and said:

87 "I am ill. I am resting.
Why do you disturb me?
You have commonsense;
you should be kind to all creatures.

88 We are born animals,
we have no knowledge of dharma;
but men use reason, and should therefore
be kind to all creatures.

89 Why does a noble being like you
do something that harms
body, speech, and heart,
something that goes against dharma?

90 You do not know dharma.
You have not listened to wise men.
You have little sense, you are childish,
so you hurt small creatures.

91 Who are you? Tell me that.
Why do you come to this forest?
There are no humans here,
and no human feelings.

92 O bull-brave hero,
tell me also where you plan to go today.
You cannot go further:
this mountain's inaccessible.

93 O brave one! This is the way to the god-world.
Only perfected mortals can go there.
Ordinary mortals
are forbidden to enter.

94 O brave one, my kind advice to you is:
Go back.
O lordly one! Listen to me: you cannot go further.
So go back.

95 Rest here, if you so wish, O bull-brave mortal:
eat the fruits and roots,
sweet like *amṛta.*
You are welcome here.

96 But why allow yourself
to be killed for no reason?
Take my advice, O bull-brave human.
I mean you well."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SEVEN

1 Foe-crushing Bhīma heard the words
of the intelligent Indra-among-*vānaras*
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and replied to him:

2 "Who are you?
And why are you in *vānara*-form?
A Kṣatriya – next only to Brahmin – asks you.
Answer.

3 I am a Kaurava, of the lunar dynasty,
born of Kuntī's womb –
Bhīma-sena, Paṇḍu's son,
Vāyu-begotten."

4 Hearing the words
of that great Kuru hero,
Hanumān smiled.
Vayu's son said to Vāyu's son:

5 "I am a Vānara.
I will not let you pass.
Be good and turn back.
Don't invite death."

6 "O Vānara," said Bhīma,
"I never asked you about death.
Just let me cross.
Make way – don't force me to force you."

7 "I am not well," said Hanumān,
"I have not even the śakti to get up.
If you must go,
why not jump over me?"

8 Bhīma said,
"The guṇa-less Supreme Ātman
is in all bodies.
It is knowable only by knowledge.
I cannot insult it:
I cannot leap over you.

9 If I did not know It
from whom all creatures
are manifested,
I could have leapt over you,
or over this mountain –
as Hanumān leapt over the ocean."

10 "What Hanumān leapt over what ocean?"
asked Hanumān.
"Best among men, if you know it,
tell me the story."

11 Bhīma replied, "My brother,
supremely accomplished,
strong and intelligent, celebrated in the Rāmāyaṇa,
Srimān bull-brave Vānara,

12 In order to rescue Rāmā's wife –
that Indra-of-long-jumpers
leapt over a nine-hundred-*yojanas'* length
of ocean.

13 That mahā-hero
was my brother;
I equal him in strength and prowess.
I can humble you.

14 So, rise and go. Let me pass,
or bear the consequences.
If you refuse, I will despatch you
to Yama's realm."

15 Hanumān knew that Bhīma
was arrogant of his strength,
and inwardly
thinking poorly of Bhīma, he said:

16 "O perfect one, be kind to me.
I am old, I am not well,
I can't get up.
Move my tail, and go."

17 Bhīma, proud of his mahā-prowess,
thought Hanumān
to be devoid
of courage and strength.

18 He thought: *I'll swing his tail
and fling this impotent* vānara
*in one throw
to the abode of Antaka-Yama.*

19 Smiling, Bhīma contemptuously
gripped the mahā-ape-man's tail
with his left hand
but found he could not even budge it.

20 Using both hands, he tried pulling
that Indra-yajña-pole-like tail.
Mahā-powerful Bhīma failed to move it
with both his hands.

21 He eyes squinted, his pupils rolled,
his face wrinkled,
his body sweated,
but he could not move it.

22 He tried again and again,
and failed each time.
He stood in front of the monkey,
embarrassed and ashamed.

23 Head bowed, Kuntī's son Bhīma
did *añjali* before the monkey,
and said: " O tiger-brave ape-man.
forgive the harsh words I said.

24 Are you a Siddha, a god,
a gandharva, a Guhyaka?
I am curious.
Who are you in *vānara*-shape?

25 O defectless mahā-muscled hero,
if it is not a secret,
and if I am deserving, tell me –
I come to you as a disciple."

26 "Since you are so curious," said Hanumān,
"O foe-chastiser,
I will tell you all.
Listen to me, O son of Pāṇḍu.

27 Lotus-eyed hero,
I was born in the womb of Kesari,
begotten by life-of-the-universe Vāyu;
I am the *vānara*-Hanumān.

28 The sun's son Sugrīva
and Śakra-Indra's son Vāli
were attended on by *vānara*-rājās
and *vānara*-chiefs.

29 O foe-crusher! The friendship that grew up
between Sugrīva and myself
was like the friendship
between wind and fire.

30 For some reason Sugrīva was expelled
by his own brother
and lived with me
at Ṛṣyamūka mountain.

31 And once, the mahā-powerful son
of Daśaratha, Rāma –
really Viṣṇu in human form –
descended on this earth.

32 With the idea of pleasing his father,
he, his wife and brother,
armed with excellent bows,
lived in Daṇḍaka forest.

33 His wife was tricked and abducted
from Janasthāna
by the Indra-of-the-rākṣasas,
wicked-atmaned Rāvaṇa;

34 Tiger-among-men Rāma was deceived
by the rākṣasa Mārīca
who took the disguise
of a gem-covered gold-plated deer."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-EIGHT

1 "Having lost his wife," Hanumān continued,
"Rāghava-Rāma and his brother,
searching for her,
met bull-brave *vānara* Sugrīva on a hill.

2 The mahā-ātmaned descendant of Raghu, Rāma,
and Sugrīva became fast friends.
They killed Vāli
and Sugrīva got the kingdom.

3 After getting the kingdom,
Sugrīva sent out hundreds and thousands
of *vānaras* with orders
to find out Sītā.

4 O mahā-muscled, bull-brave hero!
I was one of the countless *vānaras*
sent south
in search of Sītā.

5 I got news
from a giant mahā-ātmaned vulture
named Sampāti
that Sītā was in Rāvaṇa's kingdom.

6 To fulfil the mission
of spotless-in-deed Rāma,
I leaped over the ocean
of one hundred *yojanas*.

7 Crossing the shark-and-crocodile-infested ocean
by my own prowess,
I saw Sītā,
daughter of Janaka,

8 Vaidehī-Sītā-devī, in the realm of Rāvaṇa.
O finest of the Bharatas!
I gained access to her,
Rāghava-Rāma's beloved,

9 And I set on fire
the whole of Laṅkā –
all its towers, ramparts, gates –
proclaimed my name, and returned.

10 Rāma heard everything from me.
Lotus-eyed Rāma
with the soldiers' help
constructed a bridge over the ocean,

11 And crossed the mahā-ocean
with a crore of *vānaras.*
All the rākṣasas were killed
by Rama's war-skill,

12 Including Rāvaṇa,
the oppressor of the world,
with all his rākṣasa relatives,
sons, brothers and other kin.

13 Rāma installed Indra-among-rākṣasas
Vibhīṣaṇa on the throne;
Vibhīṣaṇa had bhakti and dharma,
and was kind-minded.

14 Rāma recovered his wife
as one recovers a lost Vedic śruti.
The mahā-illustrious Rāma,
descendant of Raghu,

15 Took his devoted wife
to his capital city,
inaccessible-to-enemies Ayodhyā,
and happily lived there.

16 When that most remarkable of kings
had settled in his kingdom,
I asked a boon
of lotus-eyed Rāma.

17 'Chastiser of foes,' I said,
'O Rāma, let me live
as long as your fame lives on earth.'
He said, 'So be it.'

18 O foe-oppressing Bhīma,
through Sītā's grace
I am supplied with all needs and luxuries
in this place.

19 Rāma ruled his kingdom
for eleven thousand years,
after which he went away
to his own abode.

20 *Tāta*, child, O perfect one, since he left,
apsarās and gandharvas delight me
by constant singing
of his heroic deeds.

21 O Kuru-descendant,
this path is not open to mortals:
it is for this reason
that I have stopped you;

22 For this is the path
that the gods use,
this is one of the paths to heaven.
It is not for mortals.
The lake you are looking for
lies in the other direction."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-NINE

1 Spoken to this manner,
mahā-muscled illustrious Bhīma
gladly did *praṇāma*
before his elder brother Hanumān.

2 To Hanumān, chief of ape-men,
he said gently,
"Who is more fortunate than I –
I have seen my brother!

3 I am blessed indeed.
 How happy I am to have your darshan!
I have only one request,
 and you must grant it.

4 I want to see today
 your incomparable form which you assumed
when you leapt over
 the *makara*-shark-infested ocean.

5 That will satisfy me,
 and make me believe in you."
Immensely radiant Hanumān
 smiled and replied:

6 "Neither you nor anyone else
 can see me in that form.
Things were different then;
 quite different from now.

7 The Kṛta-yuga conditions
 were different from the Tretā's,
the Tretā's from the Dvāpara.
 Everything is reduced
and diminished in this age.
 My form now is different.

8 Soil, rivers, plants, rocks,
 Siddhas, gods, mahā-ṛṣis –
all are subject to Kāla's changes
 in the different yugas.

9 Excellent scion of the Kurus!
 Do not ask to see my earlier form.
Kāla is irreversible,
 I am what I am."

10 "Tell me," said Bhīma,
 "the spans of the different yugas,
and dharma, artha, kāma, life and death
 as prevalent in each."

11 "*Tāta*, child," replied Hanuman,
 "the yuga of Sanātana Dharma was Kṛta:
all beings were perfect,
 people virtuous by nature.

12 Dharma never declined;
and people were not corrupt;
so it was called *kṛta,* perfect;
but it deteriorated.

13 "*Tāta,* child, there were no gods,
no Dānava anti-gods, gandharvas, yakṣas,
rākṣasas, and Nagas in the Kṛta-yuga;
no buying and selling;

14 The Sāma, Ṛg, and Yajur-Vedas did not exist.
No manual labour.
Wishing was enough to supply needs;
saṁnyāsa-selflessness was dharma.

15 That yuga did not know disease,
nor decay of the senses;
it did not have any malice;
absent were pride,

16 Hypocrisy, cunning, competitiveness,
and ill-feeling;
there was no fear, misery, envy,
there was no greed either.

17 As a result, the supreme goal of all yogīs –
Brahman – was attainable by all;
radiantly-white Ātman-of-all Nārāyaṇa
was in all creatures.

18 In the Kṛta-yuga, Brahmins,
Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras
pursued their sva-karma duties
with natural ease.

19 The goal of knowledge was One,
the sole refuge was One,
castes, customs, acts led to that One,
So all attained that one Dharma.

20 One God, one Mantra, and one Law;
different personal dharmas
but one Veda;
and only one Ultimate Dharma.

21 They followed the four stages of life,
according to the passage of time,
acting without wanting,
and attained the ideal goal.

22 The sign of Kṛta-yuga was this:
the ātman sought union with Brahman.
That was the Eternal Dharma
of the four *varṇas.*

23 Such was the Kṛta-yuga,
without any of the three guṇas.
Let me now describe the Tretā,
when ritual sacrifices prevailed,

24 Dharma decreased by a quarter,
and Acyuta-Nārāyaṇa appeared in red colour.
People spoke the truth
and practised dharma's rituals.

25 Yajñas developed, people observed
the various rituals of dharma:
deeds and gifts were motivated
to attain an object.

26 Men followed such a dharma,
practised tapasyā, gave gifts;
the four *varṇas* cultivated sva-dharma
and performed rituals in the Tretā-yuga.

27 In the Dvāpara-yuga,
Dharma descreased by half;
Viṣṇu appeared in yellow,
the Vedas divided into four.

28 Some studied all four Vedas,
some studied three,
some two;
some did not know even one.

29 With the śāstras divided in this manner,
actions also multiplied.
Strong pulls drove men
to tapasyā and charity.

30 And men no longer were fit
to study the Vedas in their entirety.
Intelligence declined,
truth-speaking too.

31 When men stray from truth,
all manner of afflictions take over –
kāma-lust predominates
and fated calamities follow.

32 As a result,
some turn to the practice of tapasyā;
others perform yajnas for worldly pleasures
and heavenly delights.

33 O son of Kuntī, Bhīma, in the Dvāpara-yuga
adharma corrupts men.
In the Kali-yuga,
only a quarter of Dharma survives.

34 In this yuga, Keśava Krishna-assumes
a *kṛṣṇa*-black colour
Vedas, dharma, yajñas, rituals –
all are neglected.

35 *Iti* – floods, drought, rats, locusts,
bird-pests, hostile kings –
iti rules; and disease, deformity, laziness,
sorrow, fear of famine.

36 And slowly, as the yuga moves,
Dharma progressively declines;
Dharma declining,
the people become corrupt.

37 As people become corrupt,
they work out their own ruin.
In a declining yuga, prayers of dharma
start producing contrary effects.

38 The Kāli-yuga I am describing
will arrive soon.
Creatures who live through many yugas
change accordingly.

39 O foe-chastiser,
I know you are curious about me –
but tell me, why should a wise man
seek trivial knowledge?

40 O mahā-muscled hero, now you know all
about the different yugas.
Be happy, and prosper!
And go back."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY

1 "I will not leave," said Bhima,
"till I see your earlier form.
If it pleases you
show me that form."

2 Hanumān listened to the plea of Bhima,
and revealed to him
the form he assumed
when leaping over the ocean.

3 With the idea of pleasing his brother,
Hanumān swelled himself
to gargantuan size,
in length and breadth.

4 The radiant *vānara*-lord stood straddling
the entire plantain-forest,
reaching the height
of the tallest peak.

5 He looked like a second summit
of enormous proportions;
copper-coloured eyes, sharp teeth,
frowning face . . .

6 And he lay there, straddling the forest,
his tail intermittently lashing.
Bhīma,
seeing that massive body,

7 Was bewildered, and stood there
  repeatedly horripilating;
he saw Hanumān dazzling as the sun,
  as the golden mountain,

8 Dazzling as the sky,
  and he closed his eyes.
Hanumān, smiling
  said to his brother Bhīma:

9 "Bhīma, defectless one,
  this much of my form you can see.
But I can go on increasing effortlessly.
  specially when I face an enemy."

10 Seeing that mahā-awesome,
  magnificent body of Hanumān
resembling the Vindhya peak,
  Bhīma the wind-god's son was overwhelmed.

11 His body-hair standing on end;
  large-hearted Bhīma did *añjali*
before the figure
  of Hanumān.

12 "Lord, *Vibho!*
O mahā-heroic one!
I have seen the vastness of your form.
Diminish it now with your skill.

13 I am unable to look at you
Who are like the rising sun,
Who are immeasurable and uncontrollable,
Who are like Maināka mountain itself.

14 And I am full of wonder! O hero!
I marvel that you were with Rāma
When Rāma fought Rāvaṇa.

15 Singly you routed Laṅkā
At one stroke,
And all its warriors, elephants and chariots.

16 Son of Māruta!
There is nothing you cannot do.
You fought Rāvaṇa single-handed
And he and all his followers could not defeat you."

17 When finest-of-simians Hanumān heard these words
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
he said affectionately yet seriously
to Bhīma:

18 "Bhīmasena, descendent of Bharata,
what you say in true.
That scoundrelly rākṣasa was indeed
no match for me.

19 But if I had killed the worlds' thorn Rāvaṇa,
the glory of Raghu's son Rāma
would have dimmed,
so I refrained.

20 By killing the rākṣasa-lord and his followers
and bringing Śītā back to his capital,
Rāma secured
his worldly fame.

21 Wise one, you are concerned
with the welfare of your brothers;
you are protected by Vāyu
Go your auspicious way.

22 O finest of the Kauravas! This way leads
to the fragrant Saugandhika forest,
where you will find Kubera's gardens,
guarded by yakṣas and rākṣasas.

23 Do not be so audacious
as to pluck flowers there,
because the gods deserve respect
from mere mortals.

24 O bull-brave Bharata,
men please the gods
by gifts, *homas,* mantras,
namaskāras, and bhakti.

25 So do not act rashly,
do not depart from your sense of dharma;
let your sva-dharma lead you
to the highest Dharma.

26 Without knowing one's dharma
and without respecting elders,
even men like Bṛhaspati cannot understand
dharma and artha.

27 Discriminate clearly when adharma passes for dharma
and dharma for adharma,
because this confuses men
of poor intelligence.

28 Moral conduct is based on dharma,
the Vedas are based on dharma,
from the Vedas come yajñas,
yajnas please the gods.

29 The gods subsist on yajñas
enjoined by the Vedas,
and men prosper by observing the rules
of Bṛhaspati and Uśanas,

30 And by such activities as working for wages,
collecting taxes,
trade, agriculture, rearing cattle and sheep –
which are professions of the twice-born.

31 Study of the three Vedas,
trade and commerce,
maintenance of law and order –
are the main professions of human beings.

32 If people refuse dharma in their lives,
if the dharma of the three Vedas is not studied,
and government neglected,
the world is ruined.

33 If the respective professions
are not properly cultivated,
everything collapses;
if cultivated, dharma prospers.

34 The dharma of the twice-born
is whatever leads to non-death, to *amṛta*;
it has a threefold manifestation:
yajña, study, gift-giving.

35 Performing yajñas, teaching, and accepting gifts –
is the dharma of Brahmins;
the Kṣatriya protects;
the Vaiśya tends cattle.

36 It is said that the Śūdra's dharma
is to serve the twice-born.
He cannot beg alms, perform *homas*,
or observe religious vows.
He must live
in his guru's home.

37 Son of Kuntī, Bhīma,
your dharma is that of a Kṣatriya,
to protect others.
Discipline yourself and do your sva-dharma.

38 That king rules best who takes
the counsel of wise men
and is assisted by honest
and competent ministers.
The king who rules selfishly
invites his own ruin.

39 It is only when a rājā confers
honour and favour
where these are deserved,
that the world moves towards progress.

40 It is essential that the secrets
of a hostile or friendly country –
her forts, the state of her allies –
be known through spies.

41 Secrecy, diplomacy, strength, punishment,
reward, and cleverness –
these are the ways to succeed.
And spies help here.

42 Also, singly or together,
a king should employ the following –
conciliation, gift-giving,
sabotage, and rebuke.

43 O bull-brave Bharata,
diplomacy is the essence of politics;
it never fails; therefore,
seek advice from the twice-born.

44 In matters relating to secrecy,
a woman, a fool,
a child, a greedy man, an unstable man,
should not be consulted.

45 Only the wise should be consulted,
and policy executed
through dependable officers.
Avoid fools, seek genuine friends.

46 For dharma seek men of dharma;
for profit, paṇḍits;
for guarding women, eunuchs;
for shady deals, crooked men.

47 Before embarking on a course of action,
it is wise to learn
if your enemies approve or disapprove;
employ spies for this.

48 Reward the honest
who have sought your shelter;
punish swiftly
the lawless and the disobedient.

49 Punishment and reward given justify
by a rājā
uphold the dignity of law,
and the people are contented.

50 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son,
I have explained to you this difficult dharma.
Proceed now with the serene performance
of your sva-dharma.

51 Brahmins achieve heaven by tapasyā , by dharma,
by self-discipline,
and yajña-performance;
Vaiśyas journey to heaven by charity,
hospitality and rituals;
Kṣatriyas by punishing and protecting.

52 Kings who remain unaffected
by lust, malice, greed and anger,
dispense justice properly,
and go where the good go."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-ONE

1 Contracting that huge body of his
that he had willed to giant size,
the *vānara* forest-creature Hanumān embraced
Bhīma with both arms.

2 O descendant of Bharata, Janamejaya (continued
Vaiśampāyana) no sooner was Bhīma
embraced by his brother than his tiredness vanished
and his strength returned.

3 With new strength inside him,
he felt once again
that none could equal him.
With tears in his eyes,

4 Hanumān affectionately embraced Bhīma
and said chokingly,
"Hero, go back. Let our meeting remain
only for story-telling.

5 O greatest of the Kurus,
tell no one that I live here.
The charming wives of gods and gandharvas,
O mahā-muscled one,

6 Come to this place.
They will arrive soon now.
Bhīma, meeting a human being again,
I feel as if I

7 Have encountered the son of Raghu,
who was Viṣṇu himself
in the form of Rāma,
the wonder of the whole world,
blazing sun-like to lotus-Sītā
and darkness-Rāvaṇa.

8 O great hero, son of Kuntī,
let it not be
that your meeting with me
was totally fruitless.

9 O Bharata descendant!
Ask, as a brother would, any one boon from me.
Would you like me to proceed
to Vāraṇāvata,

10 And there kill the petty sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra?
I will do so.
I will grind that city into dust;

11 I will truss up Duryodhana
and bring him here.
O mahā-powerful hero, ask it,
and I will do it."

12 Bhīma heard the words
of his mahā-ātmaned brother,
and, with great pleasure,
said to Hānumān:

13 "O bull-brave *vānara*,
O mahā-muscled one,
I take all this as done.
Svasti te'astu! Think kindly of me.

14 With you to wish us well,
O valiant hero,
the Pāṇḍavas cannot but defeat
all their enemies."

15 Addressed in this manner,
Hanumān replied to Bhīma:
"With brotherly love and friendship,
I wish you well.

16 I will rush into the ranks
of your spear-and-arrow-armed enemies
and while you roar like a huge lion,
O mahā-powerful one,

17 I will shout too,
increasing the deafening noise.
Flying on Vijaya-Arjuna's war-flag,
I will roar so fearfully

18 That the courage of your enemies
will turn pale,
and then you will easily be able
to rout them."

19 Hanumān said this to Bhīma,
son of Pāṇḍu,
and, pointing out the way to him,
he vanished.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-TWO

1 What that super-excelling simian left
(Vaiśampāyana said),
most-powerful-among-men Bhīma continued
towards Gandhamādana.

2 Recalling Hanumān's splendid body
and radiance, incomparable on earth,
and Rāma's lustrous dignity,
he proceeded on his mission.

3 Searching for the sweet-scented
saugandhika-lotus,
he passed through enchanting
groves and forests,

4 Rivers and lakes; he saw everywhere
the loveliest flowers
growing on lush trees in thickly
green wooded areas.

5 O descendant of Bharata,
he saw herds of musth-elephants
smeared with mud,
like raining cloud-masses.

6 He sped swiftly; handsome Śrīmān Bhīma
saw in places
herds of quick-glancing deer contentedly
chewing grass.

7 Fearless Bhīma went unchallenged
into hilly forests
where wild buffalo, boar and leopard
roamed;

8 The breeze-ruffled trees seemed
to stand there
inviting him with fragrant flowers
on russet branches.

9 He passed by lotus-and-lily-filled lakes,
where frenzied bees hummed
on lotus-buds
folded like palms in *añjali.*

10 His only provisions
were the words of Draupadī;
he pushed on, keeping his eyes
on the enchanting mountain.

11 Noon came and went;
and he saw stray deer
scampering in the forest;
he came to a golden-lotus lake,

12 Resplendent with *haṁsa, kāraṇḍava,*
and *cakravāka*;
the lake looked like a lotus garland
on the mountain.

13 There the mighty hero
got his first glimpse
of the mahā-Saugandhika-forest,
sparkling like the sun.

14 Seeing it, Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma felt fulfilled,
he felt his task was completed.
In his mind he stood before his beloved,
the exiled, fatigued Draupadī.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-THREE

1 Bhīma saw that lovely lake
near the Kailāsa peak;
it was lotus-filled, wood-ringed,
and rākṣasa-guarded.

2 It was fed by mountain springs
from Kubera's abode;
it was adorned with shade-giving
trees and creepers.

3 Green lilies and golden lotuses
floated on its
hind-populated, pellucid,
entirely mud-free waters.

4 High up on that mountain,
this lake appeared
like a mind-captivating, heart-ravishing
wonder of the world.

5 Kuntī's son Bhīma saw that lake
of amṛta-rasa,
and happily drank its cool, soothing,
clear, fresh water.

6 Heavenly *saugandhika*-lotuses filled the lake;
also floating on it
were lovely fragrant golden lotuses
with stems

7 Of lapis lazuli. Disturbed by the movement
of the *haṁsa*-swans and *kāraṇḍavas,*
they scattered
fresh pollen around them.

8 This was the pleasure-place
of mahā-ātmaned Kubera, rājā of rājās;
it was graced by gods,
apsarās and gandharvas,

9 And visited by divine ṛṣis, yakṣas,
Kiṁpurusas, rākṣasas and Kinnaras.
It was heavily guarded
by Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera.

10 When the mahā-powerful son of Kuntī
Bhīma
saw that divine lake,
he was overjoyed.

11 On orders from their rājā,
hundreds of thousands
of armed and uniformed Krodhavaśa-rākṣasas
guarded that lake.

12 As Bhīma, Kuntī's warrior son,
stepped forward,
dressed in deer-skin,
with golden armlets

13 And buckled sword, in the hope
of collecting the lotuses,
the rākṣasas spotted the foe-chastiser,
and shouted to each other:

14 "Ask this tiger-among-men,
dressed in deer-skin
and carrying weapons,
what is his business in this place."

15 They surrounded the mahā-muscled
radiant, wolf-waisted hero
and asked;
"Who are you? Answer us!

16 We can see you are dressed
like a muni,
yet you carry weapons,
Mahā-minded one, what brings you here?"

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-FOUR

1 "I am Bhīmasena, son of Pāṇḍu," replied Bhīma,
"born after Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
Rākṣasas, I came with him
to magnificent Badari.

2 The Pāñcāla princess Draupadī
saw an exquisite *saugandhika*-lotus
blown over by the wind from here.
She wanted more such lotuses.

3 Therefore, wanderers in the night,
I have come here;
I wish to please my faultless-featured
dharma-wedded wife."

4 "O bull-brave hero! This is the sporting ground
of Kubera," the rākṣasas replied.
"Earth-involved mortals
are not allowed here.

5 O Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
divine ṛṣis, yakṣas and gods
get the yakṣa lord's permission first,
and then set foot here.
Here also, O Pāṇḍava,
come the apsarās and gandharvas.

6 And any upstart who,
without the king of wealth's permission,
dares to enter here,
invites his own ruin.

7 You plan to take these lotuses away
without Kubera's permission –
how can you be the brother
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira?

8 First get the yakṣa rājā's permission;
then you may drink
and take what you wish.
Otherwise, no flowers for you!"

9 "Rākṣasas," and Bhīma, "I do not see
the lord of wealth anywhere.
Even if I did,
I will not beg of that mahārāja,

10 For Kṣatriya rājās do not beg –
that is Sanātana Dharma.
And I will not give up
a Kṣatriya's dharma.

11 The lotus-rich lake has filled by itself
from the mountain's springs.
It is not mahā-ātmaned
Kubera's private property.

12 It belongs to everybody
as much as it belongs to Kubera.
This being so,
why should I beg and plead?"

13 Bhīma said this to the rākṣasas;
then the mahā-muscled, mahā-powerful
strong-willed hero without a word
jumped into the lake.

14 The angry, illustrious hero was intercepted
by the rākṣasas
who shouted "No! No!"
and hurled abuses at him.

15 He ignored them all,
and jumped into the waters.
The rākṣasas mustered their forces
to stop the mahā-energetic intruder.

16 Rolling their eyes, they rushed at him
with upraised arms,
screaming, "Seize him!" "Tie him!"
"Cook him!" "Eat him!"

17 The tremendous hero lifted
his huge, gold-inlaid, magnificent mace
(like Yama's mace) and shouted,
"Stop! Stop!"

18 But they rushed upon him,
brandishing spears, axes, and other weapons.
Intent on killing Bhīma,
they angrily surrounded him.

19 Begotten by Vāyu
in the womb of Kuntī,
heroic and fearless,
firm in truth and dharma,
how could Bhīma be quelled
by the power of enemies?

20 On the banks of the lake
he stood and defeated them,
smashing their shoulders.
Beginning with the strongest,
he stood there and slaughtered
more than a hundred.

21 Tasting his might,
his prowess and courage,
the rākṣasa heroes,
unable to withstand him,
suddenly stopped
and fled helter-skelter.

22 Humbled and wounded
by the great Bhīmasena,
the Krodhavaśas fled
in frenzied confusion
to Kailāsa mountain
in the realm of the sky.

23 Defeating the rākṣasas,
as Śakra-Indra vanquished
the Dānavas and Daityas,
Bhīma plunged in the waters
and collected the lotuses
to accomplish his mission.

24 The water of the lake
was like nectar to Bhīma,
sweet and invigorating;
his strength restored,
he gathered the fragrant
golden *saugandhikās*.

25 The Krodhavaśa rākṣasas,
routed by Bhīma,
ran in fear to Kubera,
the lord of wealth,
and narrated the feats
of Bhīma's prowess.

26 Having heard their account,
Kubera smiled and said,
"Let Bhīma take as many
lotuses as he likes
for Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.
I know about this."

27 On Kubera's instructions,
after cooling their anger,
the rākṣasas approached Bhīma,
foremost of Kurus,
who was splashing happily
in the lotus-filled lake.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-FIVE

1 O bull-brave Janamejaya!
Bhīma went on gathering those rare, celestial;
varied, fresh, shining lotuses
(continued Vaiśaṃpāyana).

2 Without warning a violent wind
began to blow,
hurting the skin, showering dust
and stones.

3 Thunder roared,
meteors of mahā-fearful size fell.
Covered with darkness, the sun dimmed,
his rays paled.

4 Even as Bhīma displayed
his powerful prowess,
explosions shook the sky, earth trembled,
and dust scattered everywhere.

5 Birds and beasts screamed shrilly.
All the area
seemed to be shrouded in darkness;
nothing was visible.

6 Many other inauspicious signs
were noticed.
Seeing them, the son of Dharma,
Yudhiṣṭhira, said:

7 "What will happen to us?
Invincible Pāṇḍavas,
take my blessings, prepare for battle.
It seems to me,

8 From what I see,
that the time has come
for us to show our mettle."
Rājā-Yudhiṣṭhira looked around him,

9 But could see no sign of Bhīma.
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira, chastiser of foes,
asked Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
and the twins

10 About his brother Bhīma,
the fear-inspiring hero:
"Pāñcāla princess, where is Bhīma?
Do you know?

11 Or has that hero already accomplished
some marvellous feat?
All these omens we see around us
can only indicate a mahā-battle

12 Has taken place somewhere
or is in the offing."
Sweet-smiling Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī listened
to Yudhiṣṭhira, and,
in order to remove his disquiet,
lovingly said to him:

13 "Rājā, I picked up
a wind-wafted golden lotus
and affectionately showed it to him,
saying, 'If you can find

14 More flowers like this, get them all for me,
and return soon.
To please me,
that great hero

15 Perhaps went north-east
in search of the lotuses."
Yudhiṣṭhira listened to her,
and said to the twins:

16 “Let us follow the direction
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma took.
Let the rākṣasas support and carry
the fatigued Brahmins.

17 Ghaṭotkaca, you are like a god,
you carry Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.
I am convinced
Bhima entered the forest.

18 It is a long time since he left,
his speed is wind-swift.
In leaping over land,
he is like Vinatā’s son Garuḍa.

19 He can leap almost into the sky
and descend at will.
O night-ranger,
help us find him.

20 We must get to him before he unwittingly
offends Veda-learned holy men.”
O bull-brave Bharata,
(continued Vaiśampāyana),

21 Saying “So be it”, Ghaṭotkaca,
son of Hiḍimbā,
and the other rākṣasas,
who knew of Kubera’s lotus-lake,

22 Cheerfully picked up Lomaśa,
the Pāṇḍavas and Brahmins,
and sped with them
towards the holy forest,

23 Beautiful with *saugandhīkā* lotuses
and lovely lilies
and surrounded by enchanting groves.
They saw mahā-ātmaned Bhīma,

24 And the bodies of the slain
large-eyed yakṣas,
their eyes, arms, thighs smashed,
their heads pulped.

25 Mahā-ātmaned Bhīma stood
on the lake's edge;
he was still angry,
his eyes flashed wildly,

26 He bit his lips.
He lifted his mace with both hands,
looking like Antaka-Yama
at the end of a yuga.

27 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira clasped him warmly,
and embraced him again and again,
saying gently,
"What have you done?

28 You have my blessing,
but if you wish to do me good,
never again be rash like this,
never offend the gods."

29 Admonishing Bhīma in this way,
the Pāṇḍavas collected the flowers
and began splashing about
in the lake.

30 The massive-bodied guards
of the lotus-lake,
armed with boulders,
saw them and approached them.

31 But when they saw that
it was Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
and the mahā-ṛṣi Lomaśa, Nakula, Sahadeva,
and other Brahmins,

32 They humbly bowed their heads
(said Vaiśampāyana).
The soothing words of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
pleased the rākṣasas.

33 With Kubera's permission,
the bull-brave Kaurava heros lived happily
on Gandhamādana's slopes,
waiting for dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SIX

1 In the course of their stay there,
one day Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira
said to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, his brothers,
and the Brahmins:

2 "One after the other
we have visited many holy
and auspicious places of pilgrimage
and eye-delighting woods.

3 Prior to our coming,
they were visited by gods,
mahātmā munis
and they were worshipped by Brahmins.

4 We have listened to many stories
and histories of rājā-ṛṣis,
and of other ṛṣis
from the mouths

5 Of Brahmins whom we met
in the different sacred asharms
and in whose presence
we performed ablutions.

6 We have propitiated the gods
with flowers and water,
we have gratified the *pitṛs*
with fruits and roots.

7 Assisted by the mahātmā ṛṣis
we have performed mahā-ablutions
in the mahā-sacred lakes,
mountains and seas.

8 Along with the Brahmins
we have bathed in the Ilā,
Sarasvatī, Sindhu, Yamunā, Narmadā
and other lovely *tīrthas.*

9 We have passed the source of the Gaṅgā
seen many mountain,
including Himavant,
where various birds flock;

10 Also the magnificent Badari,
where the Nara-Nārāyaṇa ashram is located;
we have seen
the Siddha-and-ṛṣi-worshipped lake.

11 O foremost among Brahmins,
we have in successive order
visited, with mahātmā Lomaśa,
all the famed *tīrthas.*

12 Now, Bhīma, we shall go
to the abode of Kubera,
where Siddhas live.
Think best of how to enter there."

13 Hardly had the Indra-among-rājās spoken
than a disembodied voice proclaimed:
"You will not be able to enter
Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera's ashram

14 In this way. Return, O rājā,
to the place from where you came –
return to Nara-Nārāyana āshram
in Badarī.

15 From there, Kuntī's son,
go to the Vṛṣaparva āshram
filled with fruits and flowers
and visited by Siddhas and Cāraṇas.

16 Pṛtha' Kuntī's son, after passing it,
go to Ārṣṭiṣeṇa āshram;
from there, O Kaunteya, you will see
the abode of Dhanada-Kubera."

17 And instantly a refreshing breeze
began to blow:
it was soft and cool,
it showered divinely-fragrant flowers.

18 When they heard the voice in the sky,
they were amazed –
most amazed of all
were the rājā-ṛṣis and Brahmins.

19 This mahā-wondrous event
made the Brahmin Dhaumya say:
"Descendant of Bharata,
let us faithfully obey the voice."

20 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira agreed to the suggestion
of Dhaumya.
The party returned to the āshram
of Nara-Nārāyaṇa,

21 And lived there happily –
Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma and the other brothers,
and the princess of Pāñcāla,
and the Brahmins.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SEVEN

1 Living with the Brahmins
on that Indra-among-mountains,
the Pāṇḍavas became more hopeful
of meeting Arjuna,

2 One day, when all the rākṣasas had left
along with Ghaṭotkaca,
and Bhīma also
was away somewhere,

3 A certain rākṣasa came
and carried away
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira, the twins,
and Draupadī.
He came disguised as a *śāstra*-learned
skilled-in-mantras Brahmin.

4 And lived with the Pāṇḍavas
with the intention
of stealing their bows and quivers
and other weapons.

5 He had been waiting for an opportunity
to abduct Draupadī.
This wicked-ātmaned, evil-thinking scoundrel
was Jaṭāsura.

[III:157:6-14]

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6 O Indra-among-rājās Janamejaya!
Pāṇḍu's and Yudhiṣṭhira gave him shelter
not suspecting the fire that lurked
under the ashes.

7 Foe-chastising Bhīma had gone out hunting.
Ghaṭotkaca and his followers
had gone
their different ways;

8 The self-disciplined mahā-ṛṣis
and young ascetics,
Lomaśa and others,
had gone to bathe or gather flowers.

9 During that time Jaṭāsura assumed
an awesome form,
fierce, huge, monstrous, stole the weapons,
lifted Draupadī,

10 The Pāṇḍavas, and ran off.
The Pāṇḍava Sahadeva
somehow succeeded in freeing himself
after a great struggle;

11 He snatched the Kauśika sword
from the rākṣasa's hand
and, shouting for mahā-powerful Bhīma,
ran after Jaṭāsura.

12 Abducted by the rākṣasa,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira said to him:
"Fool, don't you see
you're destroying dharma?

13 Whether you are human or sub-human,
you're governed by dharma –
the rākṣasas specially
are subject to dharma.

14 Rākṣasas are the root of Dharma;
rākṣasas know Dharma
better than others.
Think – and respect Dharma.

15 O rākṣasa, the gods, *pitṛs,*
Siddhas, rsis, *uraga*-serpents,
gandharvas, the animals,
even such lowly creatures

16 As worms and ants depend
for their existence on man;
you too are dependent for life
on man.

17 If the human race prospers,
you will prosper;
if the human race suffers
even the gods suffer,

18 Gratified by man's pūjā-offerings,
the gods thrive.
O rākṣasa, we are the guardians and governors
of kingdoms.

19 If kingdoms are left unprotected,
how can people prosper and be happy?
Unless offended,
no rākṣasa should harm a rājā.

20 What harm have we done you, O cannibal?
We live here
on remnants of food offered to gods
and others.

21 We *praṇāma* our gurus
and Brahmins.
No man should harm a friend,
or one who trusts him,

22 Or whose food and shelter
he has accepted.
You lived happily with us,
and received our regard.

23 You must be mean and wicked indeed
to accept our food and then harm us.
It is wrong,
you have become old but not wise;

24 So you deserve to die as you have lived –
uselessly.
You will die today
Even if you are truly without any dharma,

25 At least return us our weapons.
Take away Draupadī
after defeating us.
But if you are motivated by folly,

26 All you will achieve is ill-fame and adharma
in this world.
If, O rākṣasa, you dare to harm
this lady Draupadī,

27 You will be like one who drinks poison
after shaking the vessel."
Yudhiṣṭhira bore his weight down
on the rākṣasa.

28 Oppressed by the heavy weight,
the rākṣasa was unable to move
as fast as before.
Yudhiṣṭhira said to Draupadī:

29 "Don't fear this stupid rākṣasa –
I have reduced his speed.
The mahā-muscled son of Vāyu
cannot be far away.

30 And as soon as Bhīma catches up,
the rākṣasa is finished."
Seeing the rākṣasa deprived of good sense,
Sahadeva,

31 O rājā, said to Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
"O rājā!
What can be more merit-earning
for a Kṣatriya

32 Than to defeat an enemy
or die doing battle?
Let us fight! Either we kill him,
or he kills us.

33 O mahā-muscled king, brave hero,
this is the perfect time and place
to display
our Kṣatriya dharma.

34 We will obtain the ideal goal either way –
by killing him
or getting killed by him.
If he is still alive after sunset,

35 O great Bharata descendant,
I am no more a Ksatriya.
Bho! Bho! Rākṣasa! Stop!
I am Pāṇḍu's son Sahadeva.

36 Either kill me and take Draupadī,
or lie dead here."
Even as Mādrī's son Sahadeva spoke,
Bhīma, shouting gloriously,

37 Arrived on the scene with his mace,
like Vāsavā-Indra himself
wielding his thunderbolt.
He saw his brothers and illustrious Draupadī,

38 And Sahadeva challenging the rākṣasa,
and the foolish rākṣasa
deprived of good sense
by Kāla,

39 Shuffling around in total confusion,
a victim of circumstance.
Seeing his fate-stricken brothers and Draupadī
carried off, mahā-powerful Bhīma

40 Exploded with anger and shouted:
"Scoundrel, wretch!
I suspected you from the time I saw you
eyeing our weapons.

41 But because I had no proof,
I didn't kill you then and there.
You came as a Brahmin,
and spoke gently,

42 You took special care to please us,
you never harmed us.
You were a guest – how could I kill
an innocent Brahmin?

43 The man murdering such a person,
even though that person be a rākṣasa,
is doomed to hell.
Your death is fated,

44 And today is the day,
because today wonder-working Kāla
has possessed your mind
to ravish Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

45 You have swallowed the bait
on Kala's hook –
you are caught like a fish,
you will die like one.

46 You will not go today
where you planned to,
or where you've already gone in thought.
Today you will go
where Hiḍimba and Baka were despatched
by me."

47 Listening to Bhīma's words
alarmed the rākṣasa.
He quickly released the Pāṇḍavas,
he was afraid of Kāla.

48 His lips throbbing angrily,
he said to Bhīma:
"Scoundrel, I am not frightened –
I'm ready for you.

49 I know about the rākṣasas
you have killed in duels.
Today I'll offer your blood
as oblation to them."

50 Bhīma heard this and, boiling with rage,
rushed at the rākṣasa
like Antaka-Yama himself
at the dissolution of the worlds.

51 Blood inflamed his eyes,
he slapped his thighs and shouted
"Stop! Stop!"
even as he ran towards the rākṣasa

52 Who stood firm, licking his lips,
and slapping his arms.
The rākṣasa also rushed at Bhima
like Bali
at thunder-wielding Indra,
his tongue lolling.

53 They grappled with each other,
locked in fierce combat.
Mādrī's sons, Nakula and Sahadeva,
roused, rushed forward.

54 Kuntī's son, wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
smiled and said,
"Stop! This rākṣasa is no match
for me.

55 O rājā! I swear, by my own self,
by my brothers, by dharma,
by my good deeds and yajñas –
I swear to kill him today."

56 Then the two heroes, the rākṣasa
and the wolf-waisted one,
resumed their duel,
gripping each other's arms.

57 No holds were barred.
Angry Bhīma and the rākṣasa
fought the kind of battle
that gods and Dānava-anti-gods fight.

58 They uprooted trees, the two mahā-powerful heroes,
repeatedly
clubbing each other,
roaring like two cloud-masses.

59 The two excellent heroes,
each bent on killing the other,
smashed trees
with the impact of their thighs.

[III:157:60-68]

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60 They battled with tree-trunks,
as in the past did Bāli and Sugrīva,
the two brothers who lusted
for the same woman.

61 Brandishing trees,
they lunged at each other
with defening shouts
intended to stun the foe.

62 When all the trees of the area
had been uprooted
or smashed into pulp
by their murderous violence,

63 They resorted to rocks. O Bharata-descendant,
the two heroes
fought like a huge mountain
and a mass of clouds,

64 Not resting for a second;
they hurled rocks at each other
each rock an adamantine,
unrepulsable thunderbolt.

65 Neither would give in;
each grasped the other
firmly by his arm.
They wrestled like two elephants.

66 They kept hitting with mahā-ferocity
at each other;
they gnashed their teeth,
making grating noises.

67 Finally Bhīma, clenching his fist
like a five-headed snake,
landed a vicious blow
on the rākṣasa's neck.

68 Stunned by that terrible blow,
the rākṣasa tottered and fell,
and Bhīma lifted
his semi-conscious foe

69 With both arms;
mahā-powerful, god-like Bhīma
lifted the rākṣasa
and dashed him on the ground.

70 Then Pāṇḍu's son battered
the inert body into pulp;
he kept hitting
with his elbow,

71 He wrenched the head
with its bleeding lips and bulging eyes
from the neck
as one wrenches
a fruit from its stem.
Jaṭāsura's head, severed by Bhīmasena,

72 Smeared with blood, lips swollen,
fell on the ground.
The mahā-bowman approached Yudhiṣṭhira
after the killing,
and all the Brahmins glorified Bhīma
as Maruts praise Vāsava-Indra.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-EIGHT

1 That rākṣasa killed (Vaiśampāyana continued),
Yudhiṣṭhira the rājā son of Kuntī
returned to Nārāyaṇa āshram
to live there.

2 Once he recalled Jaya-Arjuna vividly
and, summoning
all his brothers and Draupadī,
he said to them:

3 "We have been safely wandering
in these forests
for four years now.
Arjuna said in the fifth year.

4 He would be in white-topped Kailāsa,
rājā of hills,
where *kokīlās,* joyous black bees and flowers
sing festive paeans,

5 As do the peacocks and *cātakas;*
on that hill
live tigers, boars, buffaloes, deer,
and *gavaya*-oxen,

6 As well as predators
side by side with *ruru*-deer.
Hundred- and thousand-petalled lotuses
bloom there,

7 And blue lilies and other lilies
flourish in profusion,
its sanctity attracts
gods and anti-gods.

8 We had agreed at the time,
eager to meet him, to be there.
Pārtha-Arjuna of infinite energy
had decided

9 That he would stay in the god-regions
for five years
to learn all the arts of war.
The Gāṇḍīva-wielder

10 We shall meet there –
the terror of his foes
returning laden with divine weapons."
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
used these words before the Brahmins
and greeted them.

11 He pleased those men of great tapasyā
by doing
pradakṣiṇā before them
before telling them this.

12 They approved of his plan
and gave it their blessing
saying, "O bull-brave Bharata,
you will prosper.

13 O learned-in-dharma king,
evercoming all difficulties
you will rule the world
according to Kṣatriya-dharma."
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira gratefully accepted
the holy men's words,

14 And set out with his brothers
and the Brahmins,
accompanied by the rākṣasas
and protected by Lomaśa.

15 Yudhiṣṭhira, strong-vowed and full of energy,
mostly walked,
but was occasionally carried
by the rākṣasas.

16 Anticipating miscellaneous troubles,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
proceeded
to the lion-tiger-and-elephant-filled north.

17 He came to the mountains
Kailāsa and Maināka,
the valley of Gandhamādana,
and the white Himalayas,

18 From where many sacred streams
tumbled downwards;
he ascended the Himālayan plateau
on the seventeenth day.

19 O rājā Janamejaya! Near Gandhamādana
and on the plateau
of the holy Himālaya,
lovely with trees and creepers,

20 The Pāṇḍavas came to the āshram
of Vṛṣaparva,
surrounded by flowering trees
near river-sources.

21 The foe-chasting Pāṇḍavas,
after refreshing themselves,
approached the dharmatma rāja-ṛṣi Vṛṣaparva
and paid him homage.

22 The rāja-ṛṣi welcomed the bull brave Pāṇḍavas
as if they were his own children.
Offering him pūjā-respect, the foe-chastising brothers
stayed there seven nights.

23 On the eighth day they greeted
the world-famed ṛṣi Vṛṣaparva
and expressed their desire
to resume their journey.

24 At the proper time, having introduced
to Vṛṣaparva the Brahmins
whom he respected
and who accompanied him as friends,

25 And having entrusted to his custody
the remaining possessions,
including sacred ornaments and yajña-vessels,
the Pāṇḍavas

26 Left the āshram of Vṛṣaparva,
a sage vastly learned in all dharmas,
with insight
into past and future.

27 Wise-in-dharma Vṛṣaparva advised
the bull-brave descendants of Bharata,
the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas,
as he would his own sons;

28 Maha-radiant Vṛṣaparva went with them
for a short distance;
then, entrusting them to the protection
of the Brahmins,

29 Instructing and blessing them,
generous Vṛṣaparva returned,
after giving them full details
about their journey.

30 Kuntī's son, truly valiant Yudhiṣṭhira,
proceeded on foot
along the mountain path
where wild beasts prowled.

31 The Pāṇḍavas, after camping
on the flat lands
below the thick-wooded hills,
on the fourth day

32 Climbed the white mountain,
which looked like a mass of clouds
replete with holy rivers, gems,
gold and silver.

33 They followed the route indicated
by Vṛṣaparva,
and came across many mountains
on their way.

34 The hills became higher and higher,
more and more inaccessible,
but they happily
climbed them all.

35 Dhaumya, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
and the mahā-ṛṣi Lomaśa
all walked together step by slow step
without tiring.

36 They came to the bird-and-beast-filled,
abounding-in-trees-and-creepers,

37 Inhabited-by-monkeys, and lotus-lake-marsh-forested –
those mahā-fortune-favoured travellers
came to the enchanting, sacred,
lovely mountain Mālyavān.

38 Horripilating with pleasure,
they saw the Gandhamādana mountain,
inhabited by Kimpuruṣas,
Siddha-and-Cāraṇa-visited,

39 The haunt of Vidyādharas and Kinnaras,
the sanctuary
of herds of elephants,
lion-and-tiger-populated,

40 Echoing with the roars of eight-legged *śarabhas*,
and inhabited by many other animals.
Entering the Nandana-like
Gandhamādana,

41 The heroic Pāṇḍavas were delighted,
for the prospect pleased mind and heart,
it was auspicious,
it promised security,

42 As the Pāṇḍava heroes,
with Draupadī and the Brahmins,
entered Gandhamādana,
they heard mixed sounds,

43 Melodious, auspicious, dulect,
ear-pleasing, honey-sweet,
from various birds –
a medley of mellifluous music.

44 They saw various trees
bent under the weight of their fruits,
glowing with flowers –
mango, hog-plum, coconut, *tinduka*,

45 *Muñjataka*, *añjīra*, pomegranate, citrus, jack-fruit,
lakuca, plantain, date-palm and *amlaveta*;

46 *Pārāvatas,* champaks, lovely kadambas,
Wood-apple, *kapīttha,* rose-apple, grape, jujube;

47 Waved-leaf fig-tree, *udumbara,* banyan, aśvattha,
kṣirika,
Bhallātaka, amalaka, harītaki, bibhītaka;

48 *Iṅguda*, betel-nut, massive-fruited *tinduka*;
And many other trees on Gandhamādana's slopes,

49 With delicious nectar-like fruits. They saw
Different champaks, aśokas, *ketakas*, *bakulas*;

50 *Punnāgas*, seven-leafed trees, *karṇikāras,*
Trumpet-flowers, *kuṭajas*, lovely coral-trees and
lotuses;

51 The *pārijātaṣ*, *kovidāras*, deodars,
Sālas, palms of many kinds, pippalas, iṅgudas;

52 Silk-cottons, *kiṁśukas, aśokas, śiṁśapas,* pines.
In these trees were Greek partridges, woodpeckers,
fork-tailed shrikes, parakeets;

53 Kokilas, sparrows, Haritāla pigeons, *jīvajīvikas,*
Priyakas, cātakas, and various other birds

54 Chirping musically. To their delight, they saw
Many lakes filled with water-birds,

55 And flowers like the water-lily, white, red and blue lotus,
kalhāra, pink lotus, floating on the waters.

56 The birds included the dark-winged goose, *cakravāka,* osprey, waterfowl,
Kāraṇḍava, plava, swan, crane, *madgu,*

57 And many others. The Pāṇḍavas
Saw these enchanting sights with horripilation –

58 The lakes of Gandhamādana swarming with lotus-cups
Where intoxicated black bees hummed and sipped.

59 Enjoying these varied scenes on the slopes,
The tigers-among-men Pāṇḍavas pushed ahead on their mission.

60 They came across groves of thick creepers
Where, maddened by trumpet-sounding clouds,

61 Drowsy with the love-instinct roused in them,
Singing sweetly and shrilly and captivatingly,

62 Dancing with glorious tails fanned out,
Forest-haunted peacocks sought union with their mates.

63 Some perched on creeper-carpeted *kuṭaja*-trees,
Involved in the ritual of peacock-mating,

64 Proudly admiring their outspread tails which looked
Like crowns on tree-kings; others stood near tree-boles.

65 On the mountain-summits they saw *sindhuvara* trees
Looking like the delicate arrows of Kāmadeva.

66 The golden flowers of the *karṇīkāra* looked like
Exquisitely designed ear-rings; the *kauravakas*

67 Looked like the arrows of Kāma, made to stir
Desire and delicious disquiet in the heart.

68 They also saw *tilaka*-trees looking like
Beauty-marks on the forest's forehead.

69 They saw Kāma-arrow-piercing mango trees
Braided with blossom and buzz of black bees.

70 Also on the slopes were trees with golden flowers,
Forest-fire-red flowers; scarlet and green and
purple flowers.

71 There were śāla, *tamāla*, *pātala* and *bakula*
Circling the hill-slopes like fragrant garlands.

72 Waters clear as crystal, filled with white-breasted
swans,
Were the lakes they saw on the mountain,

73 And in them cranes shrilled, among the lotuses
Floating on water cool and soothing to the touch.

74 Everywhere was a feast of flowers and fruits,
The most wonderful lakes and trees,

75 So wonderful that the eyes of the Pāṇḍavas
Widened in delight as they moved on.

76 Each step they took was soothed by breezes
Perfumed with scent of pink, red, blue and white
lotuses.

77 Yudhiṣṭhira turned to Bhīma and happily said:
"Aho! Bhīma, the Gandhamādana forest is enchanting.

78 In this forest are the loveliest divine trees,
Thickly-clustered creepers, flowers and fruits.

79 What desire-maddened *kokilas*! What flowers!
No thorny bushes here! No trees not flowering!

80 All the trees on Gandhamādana's slopes have
Glossy foliage. Black bees hum on lotus-lakes.

81 And see how the rutting elephants with their mates
Agitate the waters! And look at the lotus-rich

82 Lake here, like the goddess Śrī herself
With fragrant garlands adorning her neck.

83 Everywhere in this forest is flower-fragrance and
Drone of bees. The playground of the gods, Bhīma!

84 Vṛkodara! Wolf-waisted brother, we have become
more than
Human, we are fulfilled. The creepers, the flowers

85 On the slopes of Gandhamādana are divine;
On them you can see the peacocks and their mates

86 Sporting. On the slopes you can see sparrows,
Cakoras, sārikās and *kokilas* maddened with desire.

87 You can see other birds perched on massive
flowering trees.
And seated on the lush boughs you can see

88 Many *jīvajīvaka*-birds of scarlet, rose
And yellow plumage chattering. Near green and
brown plots

89 Of grass, and near the mountain rivulets,
Singing with the sweetest abandon

90 Are cranes, *upacakras*, and herons; creatures
Pause and listen with pleasure to them.

91 Four-tusked, lotus-colour-skinned elephants
And their mates agitate the lapis lazuli lake.

92 And look at these many-palm-tree-high waterfalls!
Look at the glinting silvery minerals!

93 They shine like white-streaked autumn clouds.
Some are collyrium-black, others unguent-yellow.

94 Some are like the sunset's red arsenic, some
Vermilion, some minerals are green-hued;

95 Some saffron, some light-pink like the rabbit,
Some like dark cloud, others white cloud, and some
Are the colour of the rising baby sun.

96 All these add to the mountain's splendour.
Exactly as Vṛṣaparva said, gandharvas, their
beloveds,

97 And Kimpurusas can be seen on this mountain.
Songs in perfect rhythm and Sāma-Veda chants,

98 So pleasant to the ears of all creatures,
Can he heard. The divine river Mahāgaṅgā,

99 Adorned with swans, worshipped by ṛṣis and
Kinnaras, flows here. This deer-and-bird-filled,

100 This gandharva-and-apsarā-radiant, this
Pleasant-gardened forest with hundred-headed
snakes –

101 Look at it, foe-chastising Kaunteya Bhīma,
this feast of forests."
The brave Pāṇḍavas arrived at their destination.

102 No matter how much the foe-crushing heroes saw
(Vaiśampāyana said)
They were not satiated. The flower-and-fruit-laden

103 Āshram of rāja-ṛṣi Ārṣṭiṣeṇa came into their view.
They approached that deep-devoted,
Dharma-rich, lean bodied ṛṣi's āshram reverentially.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-NINE

1 Yudhiṣṭhira approached purified-by-tapasyā
Ārṣṭiṣeṇa's ashram,
announced himself, and did reverence
by bowing his head.

2 Draupadī, Bhīma and disciplined-in-tapasyā
Nakula and Sahadeva
also stood there beside the rāja-ṛṣi,
with their heads bowed.

3 Dharma-knowing Dhaumya,
the Pāṇḍavas' purohita,
approached the venerable,
strict-vowed ṛṣi Ārṣṭiṣeṇa.

4 The wise-in-dharma muni saw the finest Kaurava,
the Pāṇḍavas, with his divine insight,
and said to them,
"Sit down."

5 The ṛṣi of mahā-tapasyā
welcomed Yudhiṣṭhira, the bull-brave Kuru,
who sat down with his brothers.
The ṛṣi said:

6 "Do you refrain from untruth?
Are you steady in dharma?
Do you persevere
in respecting your parents?

7 Are gurus and elders and Veda-knowers
given pūjā-respect by you?
Do you refrain from wicked karma,
O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira?

8 O best of Kurus, do you know how to discriminate
between good action and wrong action?
Do you seek self-praise?
Do you reward favours and ignore ingratitude?

9 Do good people rejoice
in being honoured by you?
Have you pursued dharma
even in your forest-exile?

10 Does Dhaumya ever feel hurt
by your treatment of him?
Charity, dharma, tapasyā, purity
and straight-speaking –

11 Do you emulate your forefathers
by practising these?
Do you follow the noble ideals
of the rāja-ṛṣis?

12 When a son or grandson is born
in a family,
pitṛs in the ancestor-world grieve or rejoice,
thinking

13 They will either be harmed
by his bad deeds
or benefited by the good deeds
that he performs.

14 O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira!
The man who honours his father and mother,
Agni, his guru, and his ātman,
overcomes this world and the next.

15 "*Bhagavan*, revered one," replied Yudhiṣṭhira,
"your outline of dharma is excellent.
I have followed it
as best as I could."

[III:159:16-24]

Transcreated by P. Lal

16 "During the *parvas*," said Ārṣṭiṣeṇa,
"air-and-water-subsisting ṛṣis
fly through the sky
and visit this finest of mountains.

17 Kimpuruṣas fascinated
by their beloveds
are seen roaming on this mountain
at that time.

18 Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
many apsarās and gandharvas
dressed in spotless white silk
can also be seen here then,

19 Along with handsome Vidyādharas
wearing garlands,
and many mahā-Nāgas, Suparṇas
and other super-beings.

20 During the auspicious *parvas*
the sounds of kettledrums,
tabors, conch-shells and *mṛdaṅgas*
can be heard on this mountain.

21 O bull-brave Bharatas!
You can hear all these sounds
from the vantage this āshram.
You do not have to go there.

22 O finest of the Bharatas,
you cannot go further than this.
That is the playground of the gods —
mortals are forbidden there.

23 There the least presumption from a man
draws the hostility
of the super-beings,
and the rākṣasas' punishment.

24 Yudhiṣṭhira, visible beyond the summit
of Kailāsa hill
shines the path of the desire-fulfilled
god-like ṛṣis.

25 O destroyer of foes, if any person
dares to proceed beyond,
rākṣasas pierce him
with steel and other sharp lances.

26 Yudhiṣṭhira, *tāta*, my child,
during the *parvas* one can see
affluent Vaiśravaṇa Kubera, surrounded by apsarās,
borne on men's shoulders.

27 All creatures can then see
the king of the yakṣas and rākṣasas
seated on the summit of the hill,
like the newly-risen sun.

28 O best of the Bharatas,
the summit of this mountain
is the pleasure-garden of gods, anti-gods,
Siddhas and Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera.

29 During the *parvas,* when Tumburu worships
the god of wealth Dhanada-Kubera,
his chanting of Sāma-songs
is heard all over Gandhamādana.

30 Yudhiṣṭhira, *tāta*, my child,
all those in Gandhamādana
can see these and other marvels
often during the *parvas.*

31 O finest of the Pāṇḍavas,
stay here and subsist
on the delicious fruits that ṛṣis eat,
until you meet Arjuna.

32 Yudhiṣṭhira, *tāta*, my child, do not be restless.
Be relaxed, be at ease.
You will certainly, my child,
in course of time
crush your enemies with your weapons
and rule the world."

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SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY

1 "In Ārṣṭiṣeṇa's āshram (Janamejaya asked),
how long did my grandfathers,
the mahā-atmaned sons of Pāṇḍu
stay?

2 On the slopes of Gandhamādana,
what did my mahā-valiant ancestors,
gifted with marvellous manliness,
do?

3 Tell me, noble one,
how these mahā-ātmaned ancestors,
excellent heroes of the world,
passed their days.

4 Tell me specially all that mahā-muscled Bhīmasena
– that splendidly powerful hero –
did in the region
of the Himālaya.

5 O foremost of the twice-born ones!
Was there no other encounter
with the yakṣas?
Did they get to meet Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera?

6 Ārṣṭiṣeṇa said the god of wealth Dhanada-Kubera
visited that place.
O tapasyā-wealth one, tell me in detail.
Satisfy my curiosity."

7 The greatest-of-the-Bharatas Yudhiṣṭhira
(replied Vaiśampāyana)
listened carefully to Ārṣṭiṣeṇa
and acted accordingly.

8 Eating the food the ṛṣis ate,
and luscious fruits,
and flesh of deer hunted
with unpoisoned arrows,

9 And many varieties of wild honey,
the Pāṇḍavas –
the bull-brave descendants of Bharata –
lived in the Himālayas.

10 They spent five years
in the Himālayas
listening to the many stories
of ṛṣi Lomaśa.

11 Ghaṭotkaca and all the rākṣasas
in the meantime
had left them saying, 'I will come, lord,
when you need me.'

12 The mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas saw
mahā-remarkable happenings
during the months they passed
in Ārṣṭiṣeṇa's āshram.

13 Once, when the Pāṇḍavas were relaxing
in the āshram,
some serene and fortune-favoured
munis and Cāraṇas

14 Of ascetic vows came to visit them;
the Pāṇḍavas
discussed many matters of divine import
with them.

15 Some days later lovely-plumaged Garuḍa
flew off
with a powerful awe-inspiring mahā-snake
of the lake,

16 And the mountain shook and massive trees
began to topple.
The Pāṇḍavas and other beings
saw all this happen.

17 As a result, from the summit of the mountain
countless sacred, fragrant flowers
were blown by the wind
towards the Pāṇḍavas.

18 The Pāṇḍavas, their well-wishers,
and famed Draupadī
saw these five-coloured flowers of heaven,
and were spellbound.

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19 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī chanced across mahā-muscled Bhīma
relaxing in a secluded corner
of the mountain
and said to him:

20 "Shook loose by the commotion
of Suparṇa-Garuḍa's wings, O bull-brave Bharata,
these lovely five-coloured blossoms
seen by all of us

21 Are sweeping down on the river Aśvarathā.
In the Khāṇḍava forest
your mahā-ātmaned brother, Arjuna,
true to his promise,

22 Routed the gandharvas, Nāgas, and rākṣasas;
even Vāsava-Indra could not stop him:
he killed Māyāvi
and obtained the Gāṇḍīva-bow.

23 You too, Bhīma, are as powerful
as Śakra-Indra himself;
you have the same invincible spirit
and strength of arms.

24 O Bhīma! Let the power of your great arms
drive out the terrified rākṣasas
from this mountain
to the ten directions,

25 So that your friends, free from peril,
can stand unharmed
on the auspicious flower-filled
mountain top.

26 Bhīma, I have wanted this
for a long time.
I want to be on the summit,
protected by you."

27 Foe-chastising, mahā-muscled Bhīma
seemed to come under a spell;
he stood still, like a proud,
whip-tormented bull.

28 Śrīman Pāṇḍava Bhima strode
like a lion
like a bull
He was handsome
he was manly
His skin had the shine
of gold
He was proud
he was brave
he was noble
and sensitive.

29 His eyes were pink
his shoulders broad
he had the strength
of musth elephants
he had the teeth
of a lion
his neck was broad
he was tall
like a śāla-tree

30 He was mahā-ātmaned
symmetrically-proportioned
with a conch-shell neck
and mahā-muscled

He ran his hands
on his gold-plated bow
his sword
and quiver-case.

31 Proud like a lion
gaited like an elephant
he ran up the mountain
fearless and swift.

32 The creatures of the mountain
saw him like a lion
or a maddened bull
armed with bow and arrows.

33 Fearless and swift,
to Draupadi's delight,
the Pāṇḍava ran up the mountain
brandishing his mace.

34 Son of Pṛthā-Kunti
son of the wind-god
nothing could deter him –
not fear not fatigue
not distraction
not the ill-will of others.

35 Mahā-powerful Bhīma came to a narrow defile
in the mountain, and through it
approached the several-palm-trees' tall
fearful summit.

36 Seeing mahā-powerful Bhīma
ascending the mountain,
the Kinnaras, Mahānāgas and rākṣasas
horripilated with delight.

37 From the peak of the mountain,
bull-brave Bhima saw
the splendid gold-and-crystal edifices
of Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera,

38 Surrounded by golden walls,
glittering with the dazzle
of gems and jewels,
replete with gardens,

39 Some higher even than hills,
with ramparts and towers,
and graceful gates
and rows of flags,

40 And seductive girls dancing happily
under the colourful pennants
that fluttered
in the soft-blowing breezes.

41 Leaning on his bow-end
with bent arm,
he looked at the city of Kubera
with pensive pleasure.

42 A soothing breeze blew there
from the Gandhamādana,
carrying delicate fragrances
that delighted all hearts.

43 Inconceivably lovely trees graced
the gardens,
decorated with vividly
colourful flowers.

44 Bull-brave Bharata Bhima
saw the palace of Kụbera, lord of rākṣasas,
studded on all sides with gems,
and gloried with garlands.

45 Mahā-muscled Bhima stood there
stock-still, rock-stiff,
as if lifeless,
holding his mace, sword and bow.

46 Then suddenly he blew
on his horripilating conch,
twanged his bow, slapped his arm-pits,
instilling universal terror.

47 Bewildered, the yaksas, rākṣasas
and gandharvas,
guessing the source of the noise,
rushed towards Pāṇḍava Bhīma.

48 O Bharata-descendant Janamejaya!
Maces, clubs, swords, spears, axes and javelins,
carried by the hordes of rākṣasas,
began the prolonged battle.

49 In that fierce fight,
Bhīma succeeded in deflecting,
with his arrows,
the māyā-hurled spears, javelins,

50 And axes of his foes.
Mahā-muscled Bhīma's arrows
riddled the bodies of the ground-centred
and sky-ranging rākṣasas.

51 Bhīma's weapons shredded the bodies
of the roaring rākṣasas,
and the gore decorated
his massive body.

52 Bhīma stood there,
drenched in spouts of blood
squirting from the bodies
of mace-and-club-wielding rākṣasas,

53 While his weapons slashed the flesh
of the rākṣasas,
and chopped off their heads
which rolled on the ground.

54 The mountain creatures saw
the handsome Pāṇḍava,
ringed by rākṣasas,
like the sun enveloped by clouds.

55 Mahā-muscled, prowess-proficient Bhima
blinded the rākṣasas
with his arrows,
like sunlight dazzling humans.

56 The rākṣasas shouted horrific cries
of victory
and screamed incessantly
but Bhīma kept control of his senses.

57 The badly-mutilated yakṣas,
in mortal fear of Bhīma,
flung aside their weapons,
and started wailing piteously.

58 Their fear of bow-wielding mahā-muscled Bhīma
made them flee to the south,
abandoning maces, spears,
swords and axes.

59 But blocking them stood
the mahā-powerful, huge-chested rākṣasa,
Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera's friend Maṇimān,
with mace and spear.

60 He stood there with the authority
of mahā-powerful maṇliness;
he saw them fleeing and, smiling,
he admonished them:

61 "Run to Dhaneśvara-Kubera's abode!
What will you tell him there? –
That hundreds of thousands
were routed by one mortal?"

62 Saying this, the great rākṣasa,
brandishing club, spear and mace,
rushed furiously
at the Pāṇḍava.

63 Bhīma saw him advance with the speed
of a rutting elephant
and shot three well-aimed arrows
at him.

64 Mahā-powerful massive Maṇimān, not outdone,
boiling with fury,
brandished a mace, took aim,
and hurled it at Bhima.

65 The mahā-terrible mace flashed like lightning
as it sped towards Bhīma
who countered it with a volley
of stone-sharpened arrows.

66 Though shot with tremendous force,
the arrows bounced off the mace,
which sped unchecked
towards Bhīma.

67 Valiant Bhīma succeeded in averting a disaster
only by employing
his incredible skill
in mace-combat.

68 The clever rākṣasa in the meantime,
swung on Bhīma
with a fearful iron club
that had a golden handle.

69 The mahā-fearful club appeared to roar
and spout flame;
it smashed against Bhīma's right arm
and thudded on the ground.

70 Badly wounded, the mahā-bowman,
the magnificently heroic son of Kuntī,
eyes rolling angrily,
lifted his mace,

71 The splendid iron mace called Saikya
with gold inlay work,
the foe-fear-multiplying mace,
and, screaming fiercely,

72 Ran at full speed
at mahā powerful Maṇimān
who, prepared,
lifted a flaming mahā-dart,

73 And flung it deftly at Bhīma,
yelling as he did so.
But mace-expert Bhīma pulverised it
with his mace,

74 And rushed in to kill Maṇimān,
as Garutmān- Garuḍa would a snake.
Bhīma leapt agilely,
swung his mace,

75 Advanced swiftly towards Maṇimān,
and flung it
with a piercing shout
Like Indra's wind-swift thunderbolt,

76 It hit the rākṣasa, killing him on the spot,
and then fell on the ground.
All the creatures saw Bhīma
kill the rākṣasa,

77 As a lion kills a bull.
Leaving him lying there,
the surviving night-ranging rākṣasas, wailing piteously,
fled eastwards.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-ONE

1 Hearing the mountain caves echoing
with deafening noises,
Kuntī's son Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira,
Mādrī's twin sons,

2 Dhaumya and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
and their numerous well-wishers and friends,
not seeing Bhīma,
began to feel anxious.

3 Leaving Draupadī under the protection
of Ārṣṭiṣeṇa,
the mahā chariot-warriors armed themselves,
and ascended the mountain.

4 The great archers, foe-chastisers
and mahā-chariot-heroes
scaled the peak and, looking around,
saw the figure of Bhīma,

5 Standing in the middle
of a whole field of determined, brave,
mahā-powerful, mahā-bodied rākṣasas,
some dead and others dying.

6 Mahā-muscled Bhīma stood there,
mace, bow and sword in hand,
like Maghavat-Indra
among the slain Dānava anti-gods.

7 The mahā-chariot-hero Pāṇḍavas ran
and embraced their brother and,
assured of their safety,
they sat in a row around him.

8 The peak, with the four
mahā-fortune-favoured bowmen on it,
looked like heaven with its four
fortune-favoured Lokapālas.

9 Lord-of-the-earth Yudhiṣṭhira
saw the realm of Kubera
and the corpses of the rākṣasas,
and said to his brother:

10 "Bhīma, brave one, I do not know
if folly or rashness made you do this.
It is a deed as unworthy of you
as telling a lie in a muni.

11 Men who know dharma say
acts that offend a rājā
should be avoided –
and you have gone and offended the gods!

12 The man who discards artha and dharma,
and prefers misdeed instead,
is bound to reap
the fruits of his crime
If you mean me well,
never behave like this again."

13 This is how the faultless dharmātmā brother,
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
instructed Bhīma on the niceties of artha;
after which,

14 He kept silent and began to reflect
on the matter.
Meanwhile the rākṣasas who somehow survived
the carnage

15 Banded together and proceeded
to the realm of Kubera.
They sped there with extreme swiftness
and, arriving,

16 Out of fear of Bhīma,
began to wail continuously.
Throwing aside their weapons
and blood-stained armour,

17 They stood with hair all dishevelled,
and said to the yakṣa-lord Kubera:
"Fighting with maces, swords, clubs,
darts and lances,

18 O divine one, all your greatest rākṣasas
have been slaughtered;
one man, singlehanded, pulverised the mountain,
O lord of wealth,

19 And slew all the Krodhavaśa clan
of rākṣasas,
along with hordes of other rākṣasas
as well as yakṣas,

20 All now sprawled inert and lifeless
on the battlefield.
Only we escaped;
even your friend Maṇimān was slain.

21 One man, singlehanded, did all this.
Act now as you think fit.
Hearing this,
the yakṣa-lord flared up,

22 And, eyes smouldering with anger,
shouted, "What!"
The lord of wealth
heard of Bhīma's second offence,

23 And, unable to control his anger,
he said, "Yoke my chariot!"
Gold-garlanded, cloud-dark,
hill-high horses

24 Were yoked to his chariot.
Those splendid streeds,
clear-eyed and energetic,
possessed every desirable quality.

25 They were swift and graceful,
they were ornamented with gems,
they looked as if eager
to rival the wind.

26 They neighed loudly, anticipating victory.
The lustrous bhagavān,
rājā-of-rājās Kubera
set out in his dazzling mahā-chariot,

27 Extolled by the gods and gandharvas.
The mahā-ātmaned lord of wealth
was accompanied by all the great yakṣas
of his large retinue.

28 They had pink eyes, golden complexions,
massive mahā-powerful bodies;
they numbered at least one thousand
as they collected their weapons.

29 The mahā-swift horses
raced through space
towards Gandhamādana,
seeming to drag the sky behind them.

30 Noble-minded, handsome Kubera,
surrounded by yakṣas and rākṣasas,
in a chariot
pulled by magnificent horses –

31 The Pāṇḍavas saw this spectacle
with horripilating joy.
Kubera saw the mahā-chariot-heroes,
the sons of Pāṇḍu.

32 He saw them, armed with powerful bows,
and he was pleased.
He was delighted to carry out
the plan of the gods.

33 The followers of Kubera alighted
like birds on the summit
in swift descent,
and stood facing the Pāṇḍavas

34 The yakṣas and rākṣasas
noticing that Kubera was pleased
with the Pāṇḍavas,
stood and waited casually.

35 The mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas,
mighty chariot heroes –
Nakula and Sahadeva, and Dharma's son –
dharma-cherishing Yudhiṣṭhira –

36 Did *añjali* before the great giver,
the lord of wealth, Dhaneśvara Kubera,
and stood around him with joined palms,
admitting their fault.

37 Lord of wealth Kubera sat
in the royal comfort
of the multi-coloured aerial chariot Puṣpaka
crafted by Viśvakarman.

38 Thousands of yakṣas and rākṣasas,
of massive size
and mahā-swift,
with javelin-like ears,

39 And hundreds of apsarās and gandharvas
sat around Kubera
like gods around Śatakratu-Indra
of a hundred sacrifices.

40 Bhima was wearing a golden garland;
in his hands
he held a noose, sword, and bow;
he looked at lord-of-wealth Kubera.

41 He was not dismayed
by the fact
that he had been wounded by the rākṣasas,
nor perturbed by Kubera's presence.

42 The shoulder-borne deity saw Bhīma
in a defiant pose
armed with sharp arrows,
and he said to Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira:

43 "Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī, all creatures know
that you are concerned
with all creation's welfare.
Live happily on this summit,

44 And do not find fault with Bhīma.
Son of Pāṇḍu! Those who died here
were victims of Cosmic Time Kālā.
Your brother Bhīma was only the agent.

45 Do not be ashamed of his bold rashness.
The deaths of the yakṣas and rākṣasas
had been fore-ordained
by the gods.

46 O bull-brave Bharata,
I am pleased,
not angry with Bhīma –
Bhīma's action has made me happy."

47 Having said this to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
Kubera turned to Bhīma:
"*Tāta*, child, finest of the Kurus,
I do not mind.

48 What you did for Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī –
killing the rākṣasas –
though you were rash
and disregarded the gods;

49 The valour of your arms has pleased me.
O wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma!
You have freed me today
from a terrible curse.

50 Long ago the supreme ṛṣi Agastya cursed me
for some offence
I had done him. This action of yours
has freed me from that curse.

51 Son of Pāṇḍu, it was ordained
that I would suffer this;
so no blame attaches to you
in any way."

52 "Why did mahā-ātmaned Agastya curse you?"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Revered one, I am eager to know the story
behind that curse.

53 It seems incredible that you should
not have instantly been consumed
by supremely wise Agastya's curse,
along with your retinue."

54 "O lord among men," replied Kubera,
"I was on my way
to Kuśavati to attend a meeting
of the gods;
accompanying me were three hundred
Mahāpadma yakṣas,

55 All carrying weapons of war.
It so happened
that I saw finest-of-ṛṣis Agastya
absorbed in profound

56 Tapasyā on the banks of the Yamunā,
where large flocks of birds
were playing
in the blossoming trees.

57 He was standing there
with both arms uplifted,
facing the sun:
he looked like a flaming mass of radiance.

58 Śrīmān Maṇimān, chief of the rākṣasas,
my *sakhā*-friend, saw him and,
out of the crassest stupidity, folly,
pride and ignorance,

59 Spat on the head of that mahā-ṛṣi.
Agastya's anger was such
that it seemed to burn
the ten directions.

60 He said, 'Lord of wealth, Dhaneśvara-Kubera,
since your *sakhā*-friend,
this wicked-ātmaned one,
has mocked me in your very presence,

61 He will die, along with his followers,
at a mortal's hands.
You will suffer this event,
your grief shall be the expiation.

62 However, this curse will not affect
the mighty sons and grandsons
of your followers
who remain obedient to you.'

63 Maharāja! I received this curse
from the supreme ṛṣi Agastya,
and I am absolved of it today
by your brother Bhīma."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-TWO

1 "Yudhiṣṭhira," said the giver of wealth,
"patience, skill, time, place, enterprise –
"these five are said to be the basis
of all success in this world.

2 Men of the Kṛta-yuga were disciplined
and skilled in their work
and acquainted with the techniques of achievement,
O Bharata-descendant.

3 O finest of Kṣatriyas,
a Kṣatriya who has patience,
who knows the importance of place and occasion,
who knows the rules
that relate to dharma,
can govern well for a long time.

4 Brave son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
such a person can act competently,
obtain fame in this life,
and supreme excellence in the next.

5 Vṛtra-slaying Śakra-Indra,
along with the Vasus,
took advantage of right time and place,
and obtained the kingdom of heaven.

6 The man whose conceit prevents him
from seeing his own downfall –
that wicked-ātmaned, wicked-minded man
plunges into more wickedness.

7 The man who does not realise
the consequences of karma
blunders in place and time,
and is doomed.

8 Reckless, deceitful
and wicked-atmaned people,
seeking personal glory,
are doomed now and later.

9 Without a sense of dharma
arrogant, stubborn as a child
aiming chiefly
at his own fame –

10 Such a person is Bhīma,
without the least fear!
Rebuke him, O bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira.
Return to Ārṣṭiṣeṇa's āshram,

11 And live there without fear or worry
for the first dark fortnight.
Alakā's dwellers,
yakṣas, gandharvas, Kinnaras,

12 And other mountain inhabitants,
O mahā-muscled Indra-among-men,
will follow my orders and protect you
and these finest of Brahmins.

13 O rājā, O finest of dharma-followers,
consider that
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara Bhīma rashly did this –
so rebuke him.

14 From this day onwards, O rājā,
all the creatures of the forest
will greet, serve,
and protect you.

15 O bull-brave hero,
my attendants will fetch for you
all you need to eat and drink –
the most delicious kinds.

16 *Tāta!* Child! Just as Jiṣṇu-Arjuna
has claim to protection by Mahendra-Indra,
Vṛkodara-Bhīma by Vāyu, you by Dharma,
whose son you are by yoga-power,

17 The twins by the Aśvins,
because they happen
to be the children
of these twin gods,
so all of you will receive
my protection, Yudhiṣṭhira.

18 Phālguna-Arjuna, next in birth after Bhīma,
knows all about artha
and all the dharmas,
and he is safe visiting heaven.

19 *Tāta*, my child, all the qualities
that in this world
are said to lead to heaven
were in Dhanañjaya-Arjuna from birth.

20 In that man of illimitable radiance
can be found
self-discipline, charity, strength, humility,
intelligence and patience.

21 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
Jiṣṇu-Arjuna cannot do anything mean
even unwittingly.
And no one has accused him of lying.

22 He has enhanced the glory of the Kurus,
he is honoured by gods,
pitṛs and gandharvas;
he is at present
in Śakra-Indra's heaven,
learning the secrets of weapons-lore.

23 The monarch who with dharma
subjugated the earth's rulers –
mahā-powerful, energetic Śāntanu,
your great ancestor –

24 He is in heaven,
witness to the Gāṇḍīva-wielding,
foremost-of-Kurus Pārtha-Arjuna's exploits,
and is pleased with him.

25 That man of mahā-tapasyā,
who offered pūjā to the gods,
pitṛs, ṛṣis and Brahmins on the Yamunā,
performed seven mahā-horse-yajñas,

26 O rājā, the great emperor Śāntanu,
your revered grandfather ancestor.
who has attained heaven,
solicitously enquires about your welfare."

27 The Pāṇḍavas listened to these words
of the wealth-granting deity
Dhanada-Kubera (continued Vaiśampāyana)
and were happy.

28 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
bull-brave Bharata descendant,
lowered his mace, club and bow,
and namaskāra-ed Kubera.

29 Seeing him seeking protection,
protection-granting Kubera said,
"May your destroy your foes' pride,
and increase you friends' joy.

30 Chastiser of foes,
return to your delightful retreat.
O bull-brave Pāṇḍavas,
the yakṣas will supply whatever you need.

31 After learning the weapons-lore,
Dhanañjaya Arjuna will return.
Guḍākesa-Arjuna will bid farewell to Maghavat-Indra
and meet you."

32 The lord of the Guhyakas advised Yudhiṣṭhira
of excellent karma in this fashion,
and disappeared
from that splendid mountain.

33 Thousands of yakṣas and rākṣasas,
in vehicles covered with painted cushions
and glittering with gems,
followed him.

34 The excellent bird-swift horses
sped towards the abode of Kubera,
along the path
of Indra's Amarāvata.

35 The horses of the lord of wealth
galloped through space
as if pulling the clouds
and gulping the wind.

36 The corpses of the rākṣasas,
on orders from Kubera, the lord of wealth,
were removed
from the mountain summit.

37 Wise Agastya had determined this period
as the end of the curse,
so the battle-killed rākṣasas
were freed of disgrace.

38 The mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas lived happily
in the āshram
for many nights, given pūjā-respect
by all the rākṣasas.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-THREE

1 Then, O foe-chastiser Janamejaya
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
at sunrise Dhaumya performed his rituals and,
with Arṣṭiṣeṇa, went to the Pāṇḍavas

2 They touched the feet
of Dhaumya and Arṣṭiṣeṇa,
and did *añjali*
before all the Brahmins.

3 Maharṣi Dhaumya took Yudhiṣṭhira
by the right hand
and, looking at the sunrise in the east,
said:

4 "Mahārāja,
this rājā of mountains Mandara
embraces the earth
up to the ocean.

5 This particular spot, O Pāṇḍava,
beautiful with hills, groves, and forests,
is protected by Indra and Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera.

6 *Tāta!* My child! All-dharma-knowing ṛṣis declare
that this region is the abode
of Mahendra- Indra and Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera.

7 The twice-born, the wise-in-dharma,
the Siddhas, Sādhyas and gods
worship the sun rising in this region.

8 And dharma-knowing rājā Yama,
lord of living creatures,
presides over the south,
where the spirits of the dead travel.

9 This spot is called Saṁyamana,
the realm of the rājā of *preta*-spirits:
it is holy, awesome, bliss-bringing.

10 O rājā! Where Savitā the Sun touches perfect truth,
that spot is known by the wise
as the rājā-of-mountains Asta.

11 Whoever lives on this rājā of mountains
and in the mahā-ocean.
is protected by rājā Varuṇa.

12 O fortune-favoured one,
shining in the north,
is powerful, holy Mahā-Meru,
the refuge of Brahman-knowers.

13 There Brahmā holds assembly;
from there the Ātman of all creatures, Prajāpati,
projects the moving and unmoving world of forms.

14 Mahā-Meru is the sacred, sorrow-free abode
of Dakṣa and the six mind-born sons of Brahmā.

15 *Tāta*! My child, there the seven deva-ṛṣis
appear and disappear,
with Vasiṣṭha at their head.

16 Look at this marvellous mountain Meru!
Here, adazzle, sits Pitāmaha-Brahmā with the gods,
in blissful self-awareness.

17 The region of the primal Lord,
the god Nārāyaṇa,
who is without beginning or end,
the first cause of creation,

18 Shines next to Brahmā's realm.
Even the gods are unable
to look at this all-energy-focused spot.

19 O rājā! It shines in its own splendour,
surpassing the lustre of fire,
the dazzle of the sun;
which is the reason mahātmā-Viṣṇu is not visible
to the gods and Dānava anti-gods.

20 *Tāta,* my child! The abode of Nārāyaṇa
dazzles
on the east of Meru,
where the lord of all created life,
the self-born cause of the universe,

21 Manifests all creatures,
and stands revealed in graceful glory.
Tāta, my child! Brahma-ṛṣis cannot approach here,
so how can mahā-ṛṣis?

22 Son of Pāṇḍu, Yudhiṣṭhira,
only the extremely ascetic *yatis* come here.
Even the stars cannot shine here.

23 Only the inconceivable Lord of the ātman
shines here, alone:
only the severest bhakti of ascetic devotees
sees the radiant Nārāyaṇa-Hari.

24 Mahātmās, achieving perfection
by tapasyā and meritorious karma,
freed by yoga from ignorance and delusion,

25 Arrive here, O Bharata descendant,
and attain the self-existent Mahātmā,
the God of gods, the Eternal One,
and do not return to this world.

26 O mahā-fortune-favoured Yudhiṣṭhira!
This experience of Īśvara is eternal,
it does not decay, it does not end.
Offer your *praṇāma* here.

27 O descendant of Kuru,
the sun and the moon ceaselessly
half-circle Meru in the homage
of *pradakṣiṇa.*

28 The stars and planets, mahārāja,
half-circle this rājā of mountains
in the same *pradakṣiṇa.*

29 Dispeller-of-darkness, the sun-god Āditya,
with its lesser luminaries,
does *pradakṣiṇa* before this mountain.

30 Day-creating Divākara Vibhāvasu
sets in the evening,
and stands on the north of the mountain.

31 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira! The sun-god Savitā,
wishing the welfare of all,
approaches Meru from the east.

32 The god of the moon Bhagavān Soma moves
with the constellations,
and divides the month
according to the meeting of the *parvas.*

33 Inexorably circumambulating Mahā-Meru
and nourishing all creatures,
the moon returns to Mandara.

34 In the same way, darkness-dispelling Āditya
reveals the universe with his sunrays,
and moves in his undeviating course.

35 When he arrives in the south,
dew forms,
and cold weather blankets the earth.

36 Turning back, Vibhāvasu the sun uses his energy
to drain out energy
from the worlds' moving and unmoving life.

37 And perspiration, tiredness, drowsiness and lethargy
take hold of humans,
and all creatures feel an urge to sleep.

38 Then the sun god Bhānumān moves
across unknown regions,
and brings rains to revive flagging life.

39 When rains, wind and warmth
have reinvigorated moving and unmoving life,
the splendidly-radiant one
resumes his course.

40 And so, son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
the wheel of Kālā-cakra turns,
and the sun-god Savitā moves,
affecting all life.

41 He never rests, O Pāṇḍava-Yudhiṣṭhira,
he never changes course.
He sucks energy from creatures,
he restores energy to them.

42 O Bharata descendant, that radiant lord
gives life and movement
to all creatures,
ceaselessly creates day and night,
and *kalā*-moon-measures and *kāṣṭhā*-time measures."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FOUR

1 The mahātmā Pāṇḍavas,
waiting for Arjuna,
observed holy vows
on Gandhamādana,
developing deep fondness
for that Indra-among-mountains.

2 Gandharvas and maharṣis
were happy to visit
these pure-wishing heroes,
foremost among men
who were totally devoted
to patience and truth.

3 Like the Maruts arriving
in the realm of heaven,
the Pāṇḍavas were glad
to arrive at this mountain
filled with the loveliest
of flowering trees.

4 Gazing at the summit
and slopes of the mountain
spread over with flowers,
melodious with the calls
of peacocks and *haṁsas*,
the Pāṇḍavas felt happy.

5 They saw tanks on that mountain
dug by Kubera,
brimming with lotuses;
in them were kadambas,
kāraṇḍavas and *haṁsas,*
surrounded by trees.

6 They saw the loveliest playgrounds,
soothing the mind,
prolific with flowers
of all varieties,
glittering with gems,
for Dhanada-Kubera to sport in.

7 The Pāṇḍava ascetics
wandered there freely,
unable to absorb all
the sublime richness
of multi-coloured trees
draped in cloud-masses.

8 Such was the radiance
of this lofty mountain
and the brilliant verdure
of the perennial plants,
one could not tell the difference
between day and night.

9 Those lion-like heroes
saw the sun rise and set
in flaming splendour,
and nourish the moving
and unmoving life
of that great mountain.

10 They saw darkness enter
and saw darkness leave,
the sun rising
and the sun setting
obscuring the cardinal points;
and the Pāṇḍava brothers,

11 Firm-willed and strict-vowed,
pursuers of dharma
and reciters of the Vedas,
patiently waited
for the return of Arjuna,
the maha-chariot-hero.

12 They said, "Let all here
find joy in welcoming
skilled-in-weapons' Arjuna,"
and the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī
dedicated themselves
to the practice of yoga.

13 Lovely were the forests
on that great mountain,
but thoughts of Kirīṭin-Arjuna
made every day and night
appear to the Pāṇḍavas
like an endless year.

14 From the time mahā-ātmaned Arjuna,
with Dhaumya's permission,
left with matted hair,
the Pāṇḍavas were joyless.
How could they be happy
with thoughts of him disturbing?

15 Sincè the time Jiṣṇu-Arjuna,
with Yudhiṣṭhira's permission,
left the forest of Kāmyaka,
striding like an elephant,
the Pāṇḍavas were lost
in inconsolable grief.

16 In this way the Bharata-descendants
passed a difficult month
on that great mountain,
thinking of Arjuna,
who had gone to Vāsava-Indra
to learn weapons-lore.

17 After living five years
in the abode
of thousand-eyed Indra,
and obtaining all divine weapons –

18 Such as Agni, Varuṇa, Soma,
Vāyu, Viṣṇu,
Indra, Paśupati, Brahma, Parameṣṭhin,
Prajāpati,

19 Yama, Dhātā, Savitā, Tvaṣṭā,
Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera –
he paid homage to Śatakratu-Indra
of a hundred sacrifices,

20 And, after doing *pradakṣiṇa* around him,
Arjuna sought Indra's permission
and returned happily
to Gandhamādana.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIVE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
Once, waiting for Arjuna,
the mahā-chariot-hero
Pāṇḍavas saw Indra's chariot,
dazzling like lightning.
suddenly arrive

2 Driven by Mātali,
that sky-flaming chariot
sped like a mahā-meteor
through enveloping clouds,
or like a smokeless
long tongue of fire.

3 Sitting in the chariot
was Kirīṭin-Arjuna
garlanded and ornamented.
Ablaze with glory,
equal of Indra, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
alighted on the mountain.

4 Descending from the chariot
of thunder-wielding Mahendra-Indra,
garlanded-and-crowned
Arjuna touched the feet
of Dhaumya first and then
of foe-conquering Yudhiṣṭhira.

5 He touched the feet also
of wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma;
he was honoured by the twins.
Speaking gently to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
he stood humbly
before Yudhiṣṭhira.

6 All the people present
were delighted to see him
among them at last.
Garlanded-and-crowned
Arjuna was delighted
and fulsomely praised rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

7 Seeing Indra's chariot,
from which Namuci-slaying
Indra had routed
seven forces of anti-gods,
the Pāṇḍavas in joy
did *pradakṣiṇa* around it.

8 The descendants of Kuru,
in excess of excitement,
richly honoured Mātali,
equal of the chief god;
from him they enquired
about the gods' welfare.

9 And Mātali greeted them,
speaking as a father
speaks to his sons,
after which he returned
in his radiant chariot
to the lord of heaven.

10 After Mātali had left,
the finest of royal ones,
the slayer of his foes,
the son of Śakra-Indra
took off the ornaments
given by Indra –

11 Sun-dazzling ornaments –
and gave them to his beloved,
the mother of Sutasoma.
Then he seated himself
among the bull-brave Kauravas
and sun-radiant Brahmins,

12 And in faithful detail
marrated whatever
had been his experiences.
"This is how I learnt
the secrets of weapons
from Śakra-Indra, Śiva, Vāyu;

13 And I pleased all the gods,
particularly Indra,
with my deep dedication
and humble behaviour."
After telling in brief
of his stay in heaven,

14 Kirīṭin-Arjuna, doer-of-straight-deeds,
slept peacefully
that night
with the twin sons of Mādrī.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SIX

1 Night ended (Vaiśampāyana continued)
and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, with his brothers,
approached and honoured
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

2 Simultaneously there was heard
a deafening din
in the sky – the tumultuous sounds
of divine musical instruments,

3 And the rattle of chariot wheels,
the ringing of bells.
Predatory beasts, deer and birds
began screaming.

4 In sun-dazzling chariots,
hosts of gandharvas and apsarās
from all sides followed
the foe-chastising rājā of the gods,

5 Chariot pulled by divine steeds
painted with Jambunada gold
and thundering like clouds
in flaming splendour.

6 The hostile-city-destroying rājā of the gods
came to meet Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons;
thousand-eyed Indra alighted
from his chariot.

7 No sooner had Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
seen the mahā-ātmaned deity
than he and his brothers
rushed forward.

8 Generous *dakṣiṇā*-giver Yudhiṣṭhira
offered his pūjā-respect
to illimitably-ātmaned Indra,
as enjoined by tradition.

9 Arjuna also praṇāma-ed Puraṁdara-Indra,
rājā of the gods,
and stood before him
like a servant does, humbly.

10 The mahā-radiant son of Kuntī,
noble Yudhiṣṭhira,
seeing Dhanañjaya-Arjuna standing thus,
was pleased.

11 Arjuna's hair was matted,
as advised by the rājā of the gods Indra.
Pleased, Yudhiṣṭhira affectionately
smelt Phālguna-Arjuna's head.

12 Yudhiṣṭhira offered pūjā-respect to Indra,
rājā of the gods.
Seeing large-hearted and happy rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
do this,

13 The rājā-of-the-gods Puraṁdara-Indra
said to him:
"Rājā Pāṇḍava, you will govern
the whole earth.
May you prosper, son of Kuntī!
Return to Kāmyaka.

14 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna has received
all weapons from me;
his deeds have pleased me;
O rājā, in the three worlds
none will ever succeed
in defeating him in battle."

15 The thousand-eyed deity said this
to Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
and, eulogised by maharṣis,
returned to the realm of heaven.

16 That learned man who studies carefully
the meeting of the Pāṇḍava
with Śakra-Indra
in the abode of the god of wealth Kubera,

17 And observes brahmacarya,
subdues his senses and keeps strict vows,
lives a hundred years
in complete happiness.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SEVEN

1 Śakra-Indra returned to his heaven (continued
Vaiśampāyana), and dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-
Arjuna, his brothers, and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
offered pūjā-respect to Dharma's son

2 Yudhiṣṭhira who smelt the bowed head
of Pāṇḍava Arjuna.
Yudhiṣṭhira, his voice choking with happiness,
said to Arjuna:

3 "Arjuna, how did you spend your time
in heaven?
How did you please rājā-of-the-gods Indra,
how were the weapons obtained?

4 Are the weapons securely in your hands?
O Pāṇḍava,
did Rudra-Śiva and the king of the gods
provide them gladly?

5 How did you meet Bhagavan Śakra-Indra
and trident-wielding Pināka-dhṛk-Śiva?
How did you propitiate them,
how get the weapons?

6 What special service did you render
the foe-tormentor,
the Bhagavān of a hundred sacrifices Śatakrata-Indra
who said, 'You please me'?

7 Tell me this in detail, O mahā-shining one:
this is what I would like to hear.
How did you please Devarāja-Indra
and Mahādeva-Śiva?

8 Tell me, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
what special service you rendered
to the wielder of the thunderbolt,
foe-chastising Indra."

9 Listen, mahārājā (said Arjuna),
to the way in which
I met hundred-sacrifices' Śatakratu-Indra
and Bhagavān Śaṅkara-Śiva.

10 Acting on the knowledge that you imparted to me,
O foe-crushing rājā,
I followed your instructions and practised tapasyā
in the forest.

11 I went from the Kāmyaka forest
to Bhṛgutuṅga;
after one night of tapasyā there
I met a Brahmin.

12 "Tell me, son of Kuntī," he said,
"where you are going."
I told him all about my plans
of travel.

13 O finest of rājās!
He was pleased with the way
I answered his question,
and he began pūjā-praising me.

14 He seemed to be very pleased indeed;
he said, "O Bharata-descendant!
Practise tapasyā.
Tapasyā will reveal the lord of the gods."

15 I followed his advice
and went to the Himālayas;
there, mahārāja, I practised tapasyā,
living on fruits and roots for a month.

16 Son of Pāṇḍu, the second month
I subsisted only on water,
and during the third
I ate nothing at all.

17 The fourth month I remained standing
with arms upraised;
I was surprised that I lost
none of my strength.

18 After the first day of the fifth month,
there appeared
in front of me
a creature that looked like a boar,

19 Scraping the ground with his jaws,
stamping with his feet,
rubbing it with his belly,
and running wildly here and there.

20 A second shape followed him –
a huge hunter,
armed with bow, arrows and sword,
with women around him.

21 I lifted my bow and inexhaustible quivers,
aimed,
and fired one arrow that pierced
that horripilating creature.

22 The hunter simultaneously drew
his bow tight,
and fired even better than I did.
I was stunned.

23 O rājā! He spoke to me:
"Who are you to have shot an animal
I shot first?
You violate the dharma of hunting.

24 I will shatter your insolence
with these sharp arrows.
Wait!" The massive being threatened me
with his bow.

25 He fired a mahā-volley of arrows at me,
like a shower on a mountain.
I replied to it.
with a mahā-counter-shower.

26 I pinned him down with a barrage
of mantra-inspired, fiery arrows,
like thunderbolts
shattering a mountain.

27 Then, without warning,
his body seemed to multiply
a hundred, a thousand-fold.
I shot at all the bodies.

28 Then, O Bharata-mahārāja,
when I noticed
that his different bodies merged into one,
I shot again.

29 This time he changed into a puny body
with a massive head,
then, as suddenly, into a massive body
with a tiny head.
He resumed suddenly
his former shape.

30 When, O bull-brave Bharata,
I discovered that my arrows
were totally ineffective,
I aimed the mahā-Vāyu-weapon at him.

31 Even the wind-god weapon failed
to deter him.
I was amazed. I could not believe
it had no effect.

32 Mahārāja! I rallied my powers
and continued to harass him
with all kinds of weapons
in that mahā duel.

33 I fired the Sthūṇākarṇa, Jāla,
the terrifying Śaravarṣa,
Salabha and Aśmavarṣa weapons
successively at him.

[III:167:34-42]

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34 O king! He swallowed all these missiles.
When I saw him devour them,
I trained the mahā-Brāhma-weapon
at him.

35 A hail of burning arrows assailed him.
Suddenly,
with arrows protruding all over,
he began to swell.

36 The impact of that last missile
that I fired
made the worlds quake,
the sky seemed to burst into flame.

37 But that creature of mahā-fierce energy
repulsed that weapon also.
O rājā! The Brāhma-weapon neutralised,
I panicked in mahā-fear.

38 When finally I lifted my bow
and began shooting arrows
from my inexhaustible quiver,
he devoured these too.

39 With all my weapons either repulsed
or devoured,
I decided to grapple and wrestle
with the creature.

40 First we slammed blows at each other;
then some well-aimed slaps.
But I failed,
and fell down senseless.

41 Mahārāja, he burst into laughter
and vanished from that place.
The girls vanished too.
I was dumbfounded.

42 Maharājā! That superhuman bhagavan suddenly
reappeared in another super-shape,
this time wearing
a magnificent dress.

43 The great lord of all gods,
Bhagavan Maheśvara,
discarded his hunter's disguise
and appeared in his divine form.

44 The many-shaped wielder of the Pinākа-trident,
whose banner is the bull
and who carries serpents,
Bhagavān Śiva appeared with Umā.

45 He was holding the trident.
He approached me,
saw me ready for combat, and said,
"Foe-crusher! You have pleased me."

46 He picked up my bow and inexhaustible quiver
of arrows,
returned them to me, and Bhagavān Śiva said,
"Ask any boon.

47 Kunti's son, I am pleased with you.
What would you like?
What do you want from me?
Ask, brave one, and I will give it.

48 Immortality apart,
what is it that you want most?"
I did *añjali* before him and,
thinking of weapons,

49 I inwardly praṇama-ed him,
saying these words:
"Bhagavan, if you are pleased with me,
grant

50 That I have complete knowledge
of all god-blessed weapons."
Bhagavān Tryambaka-Śiva replied,
"It will be done.

51 Pāṇḍava, I give you my own
Rudra-weapon."
With these words he presented me
the mahā-Pāśupata-missile.

52 After giving me that eternal weapon,
Mahādeva-Śiva said,
"Remember never to hurl this weapon
at human beings.

53 If hurled at a creature of small energy,
it will annihilate the worlds.
Hurl it only as a last resort,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

54 This divine weapon is the all-weapons'
anti-weapon:
you may use it freely to neutralise
other weapons."

55 The bull-bannered god, pleased,
presented me that weapon
which can obliterate enemies
and destroy all hostile forces –

56 A weapon without equal,
which even the gods, Dānava-anti-gods
and rākṣasas fear. Ordered by him,
I sat down there,

57 And in my very presence the divinity
Disāppeared from the spot mysteriously.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-EIGHT

1 O Bharata-descendant! By the grace
of that mahātmā god of gods Tryambaka-Śiva
(continued Arjuna)
I passed the night happily there.

2 When the night ended,
I finished my morning worship,
and saw that excellent Brahmin
I had met earlier.

3 I gave him an exact account
of all that happened –
I mean my encounter
with Bhagavān Mahādeva-Śiva.

4 O Indra-among-rājās, that excellent Brahmin
was pleased with me
and said, "No one can see Mahādeva-Śiva
as you have.

5 Defectless one, you will see
the lord of the gods, Devendra-Indra,
with Vaivasvata-Yama and the Lokapāla-
world-guardians, and get your weapons."

6 O rājā! He said this and kept embracing me
again and again;
then the sun-radiant Brahmin
went where he wished to go.

7 That afternoon, O foe-destroyer,
a soft, pure breeze
began blowing,
as if making the world born anew.

8 At the foot of the Himālaya hill,
fragrant, fresh,
exquisitely pretty flowers burst open
near and around me.

9 From all sides could he heard
a sweet, divine medley of music,
and chants
in praise of Indra.

10 And any number of gandharvas
and apsarās
began singing eulogies
to the god-of-gods Indra.

11 All the Maruts and followers of Mahendra-Indra
and dwellers of the divine regions
arrived there
in celestial chariots.

12 And soon Indra,
accompanied by his consort Śacī
and all the different gods,
appeared in horse-drawn ornamented chariots.

13 Exactly at that moment, O rājā,
    incomparably handsome Kubera,
borne on men's shoulders,
    stood in front of me.

14 I saw Yama sitting in the south,
    and the rājā of the gods Indra
and Varuṇa
    seated in their respective places.

15 O bull-brave mahārāja,
    they gave me confidence, saying,
"Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
    see the Lokapāla world guardians here.

16 You were given a vision of Śaṅkara-Śiva
    to make the task of the gods easier.
Receive now from us
    the various weapons."

17 I offered my *praṇāma*
    to the assembled bull-brave gods,
and gratefully accepted
    the powerful weapons.

18 Lord! *Vibho*! After I had accepted them,
    I was granted leave to go.
Then, O foe-tormentor, the gods returned
    to their different abodes.

19 The lord of the gods Bhagavan Maghavat Indra
    climbed into his chariot
and said, "Phālguni-Arjuna,
    you must visit heaven.

20 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna! Even before I arrived here,
    I knew you would vist us.
O bull-brave Bharata,
    I will reveal myself to you.

21 Because you have bathed in the various *tīrthas*,
    O Pāṇḍava,
and practised tapasyā,
    you will be able to enter heaven.

22 But you will have to practise
even more severe tapasyā, O foe-destroyer,
if you wish to stay for some time
in heaven.

23 I have ordered Mātali
to escort you to heaven.
Your name is familiar to the gods
and mahātmā munis."

24 I replied to Śakra-Indra,
"Grant me your grace, Bhagavān.
O lord of heaven
be my ācārya in weapons-training."

25 "Tormentor of foes," replied Indra,
"your feats in arms will be fierce and cruel.
Your desire to succeed will be fulfilled,
O Pāṇḍava."

26 I said, "Destroyer of foes,
I promise never to fire
these divine weapons at men
except as anti-missiles.

27 Therefore, O lord of the gods,
O bull-brave deity,
grant me the weapons, that I may attain
the realm of heroes."

28 "Dhanañjaya Arjuna," replied Indra,
"I said what I said
in order to rest you.
You are my son, a worthy son.

29 Go to my realm, O Bharata,
and learn about the weapons
of Vāyu, Agni, the Vasus,
Varuṇa, the Maruts,

30 Sādhyas, Pitāmahas, gandharvas,
Uragas and rākṣasas,
and of Viṣṇu
and the various Nirṛtis;

31 And specially, O Kuru descendant,
the weapons
that I preside over."
Saying this, Śakra-Indra vanished.

32 I saw the sacred, divine, most excellent chariot
of Indra,
yoked with horses,
arrive, driven by Mātali.

33 The Lokapāla world-guardians had all left.
Mātali said to me, "O mahā-radiant one!
The rājā-of-the gods Devarāja Indra
wishes to see you.

34 O mahā-muscled mortal,
prepare for perfection;
prepare in your human body to see
the heaven of good men.

35 The thousand-eyed deity wishes
to see you."
Mātali said this to me;
I bowed to the snow-clad Himālayas,

36 Did *pradakṣiṇa* around them,
and ascended the excellent chariot.
The kind-hearted charioteer Mātali,
expert in horses,

37 Drove the horses
as swift as mind or wind;
he saw me sitting unmoved
in the chariot,

38 Looked straight into my face, O rājā,
and bemusedly said:
"I am amazed today,
absolutely amazed,

39 That, sitting in this divine chariot,
you remain still.
O bull-brave Bharata,
even the rājā of the gods

40 Is unable to keep his balance
when the horses kick off.
The fact that you
are able to sit still

41 Suggests to me that you have in this respect
surpassed Śakra-Indra himself."
Saying these words,
Mātali soared to the sky,

42 To the celestial realm,
and pointed out to me
the abodes and palaces of the gods.
The horse-flown chariot ascended higher, O rājā,

43 And I saw the ṛṣis and gods
offer pūjā-respect to it.
I saw the travelling-wherever-they-wish
divine ṛṣis,

44 The radiant gandharvas and the apsarās.
The garden of Nandana
and other gardens of
the gods

45 Were pointed out to me by Mātali,
Śakra-Indra's charioteer.
I also saw the palace of Śakra-Indra
called Amaravati,

46 Exquisitely decorated with jewels,
with divine trees
that supplied all desired fruits.
No heat or cold here,

47 No signs of old age,
no lassitude of any kind.
Nor did I see grief, weakness,
and drooping spirits.

48 O foe-destroying mahārāja, for the gods in heaven
there is no decay;
O lord of the earth, they do not suffer
from anger and avarice.

49 O rājā! In the realms of the gods,
all are always content:
the trees are perennially green-leaved,
flowered-and-fruited,

50 And the lakes are over-full
with fragrant lotuses.
The breeze that blows is sweet,
refreshing, pure.

51 The ground glitters with gems
and multitudinous flowers.
Many eye-catching animals,
many sweet-chirruping birds,

52 Many wanderers of the skies
can be seen there.
There I saw the Vasus, Rudras,
Sādhyas and Maruts,

53 The Ādityas and Aśvins,
and I offered them all my pūjā.
They offered their blessings
for my strength, fame, prowess,

54 Skill in weapons, and victory on the battlefield.
Entering
that captivating city,
pūjā-respected by gods and gandharvas,

55 I faced the hundred-eyed rājā of the gods
and did *añjali* before him.
Generous Śakra-Indra
offered me half his seat.

56 Vāsava-Indra accorded me every honour,
and touched my body.
So, with the gods and gandharvas,
O generous dispenser of *dakṣiṇās,*

57 I lived in heaven, eager to get arms
and study the secrets of weapons-lore.
Citrasena became my friend,
O Bharata-descendant.

58 O rājā! He taught me all the knowledge
known to gandharvas.
O king, in Indra's realm
I was given pūjā-respect.

59 And I lived happily acquiring weapons
and having all my desires satisfied,
O bull-brave Bharata,
listening to melodies
and clear-toned musical instruments,
watching the finest apsarās dance.

60 I did not neglect these arts,
O Bharata-descendant,
but I concentrated my energies
on the study of the science of warfare.

61 The thousand-eyed lord god was pleased
with my efforts.
O rājā! This is the way I passed my days
in heaven.

62 After I had become expert and gained
his approval,
the horse-borne deity Indra placed his hands
on my head and said.

63 "Leave aside imperfect humans
on the earth –
even the gods will not now be able
to defeat you.

64 Your might now is incalculable and invincible,
among gods and anti-gods
you have no equal in battle."
Horripilating, the deity added:

65 "Because you are alert, dexterous,
truthful and self-disciplined,
no one can compare with you in combat.
O hero.

66 You protect Brahmins, you are skilled in arms,
you are brave,
O incomparable Kuru.
You have now fifteen weapons,

[III:168:67-75]

Transcreated by P. Lal

67 And five ways of handling them;
you have no equal, Pārtha-Arjuna.
You have learnt to shoot; retract;
repeat-shoot, repeat-retract; Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,

68 You have learnt how to revive innocents
burnt in crossfire,
and repair the weapons damaged
by your enemies.
The time has come to pay your guru's fees,
O foe-destroyer.

69 Promise to pay, and I will tell you
what must be paid."
O rājā I said to the rājā-of-gods Indra
these words:

70 "If it is in my power to pay what is asked,
consider it already paid."
The slayer-of-Bala-and-Vṛtra Indra
smiled, O rājā, and said:

71 "There is nothing in the three worlds
you cannot accomplish.
My enemies – the Danava-anti-gods
known as the Nivātakavacas –

72 Have hidden themselves in forts
in the ocean's womb.
There are thirty million of them,
all equally lustrous.

73 Son of Kuntī, go and destroy them,
as your guru's fee."
I was provided a chariot driven by Mātali,
with peacock-feathered

74 Maned horses pulling it –
a mahā-radiant vehicle!
He placed upon my head
this wonderful crown,

75 And presented me with ornaments
to adorn my body,
along with this impregnable armour
so pleasing to the skin,

76 And he strung my Gāṇḍīva bow
with a special cord.
I climbed into the celestial chariot
and set out,

77 Knowing it was the same from which,
in the past, the lord-of-the-gods Indra
routed Vicocana's son Bali.
The gods, roused by the noise,

78 Mistaking me for Devarāja-Indra,
approached me.
They saw me and asked: "Phālguni-Arjuna,
what are your plans?"

79 I told them all that had happened
and added:
"I have determined to go and wipe out
the Nivātakavacas.

80 O fortune-favoured ones, O defectless ones,
give me your blessings that I may succeed."
They were pleased and,
with full joy, O lord of the earth,
accorded me the same respect
that they would Puraṁdara-Indra.

81 "In this chariot," they said,
"Maghavat-Indra drove to victory,
defeating Śambara, Namuci, Bala,
Vṛtra, Pṛahlāda, and Naraka.

82 In this chariot Maghavat-Indra drove
triumphant and routed
hundreds, thousands, and millions
of Daitya anti-gods.

83 Kuntī's son, you too, riding in this chariot
and displaying your feats,
will defeat the Nivātakavacas,
as Maghavat-Indra did once.

84 Here is the excellent conch-shell
to help you defeat the Dānava anti-gods.
With it mahatma Śakra-Indra
subdued the worlds."

[III:168:85-86; 169:1-6]

85 The gods handed me that sea-born
conch-shell Devadatta,
"Gift-of-the-gods". I accepted it.
The immortals sang my praises.

86 Eager to do battle,
I set out for the awesome abode
of the Dānava anti-gods;
I carried armour, conch, and bow.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-NINE

1 With the praises of the maharṣis accompanying me,
(said Arjuna)
I arrived at the fearsome unplumbed ocean,
the lord of waters.

2 I saw the waves billowing
with creamy froth,
tumbling on top of each other
like huge white cliffs.

3 I saw hundreds of gem-laden ships
on it,
like stately masses of clouds
in the sky;
I saw *timiṅgilas*, tortoises,
and *timitimiṅgilas*,

4 And *makaras* like submarine reefs.
I saw thousands of shells
lying submerged in water
(Arjuna went on),

5 Like stars on a night of fleecy clouds.
Thousands of-semi-precious stones
floated about
in heapts;

6 And a fearful wind kept howling
over the scene.
It looked wonderful to me.
Near the excellent lord of waters,

7 Whose tides swirled in huge eddies,
I spotted the city
of the Daitya anti-gods.
Approaching the under-world, Mātali,

8 Expert chariot-driver, sitting upright,
drove furiously in;
the city reverberated with the clatter
of the wheels.

9 Mistaking the noise of the chariot
for roaring clouds,
and thinking I was the rājā-of-the-gods Indra,
the Dānava anti-gods were alarmed.

10 Nervous and trembling, they stood,
brandishing arrows,
bows, swords, javelins, axes, clubs
and maces.

11 They made hasty preparations
to defend their city;
their bodies shaking with fear,
they closed the gates.

12 I lifted my mahā-reverberating conch Devadatta,
and I blew into it
again and again;
the noise was awesome.

13 That noise soared up to heaven,
and echoed back;
the impact was so deafening
that even mahā-powerful creatures hid themselves.

14 All the Nivātakavacas,
carrying all kinds of weapons
and wearing various kinds
of armour,

15 Brandishing mahā-spears and maces,
clubs and axes,
sabres and shields and chariot-wheel-cakras
and swords,

16 Flame-spitters and pellet-ejecters,
and gem-encrusted daggers,
rushed out in hundreds
to attack me.

17 O bull-brave Bharata!
Shrewdly calculating the course of the chariot,
Mātali drove the horses across
a level stretch of ground,

18 To give me the advantage of speed.
So swift were the wind-fleet horses,
everything blurred.
I was stupefied.

19 The Dānava anti-gods noisily sounded
thousands of musical instruments,
creating
a cacophonous medley.

20 Disturbed by the dissonance,
hundreds of thousands of hill-huge fishes
began rushing across
the ocean.

21 The Dānava anti-gods made a frontal asault
on me,
letting loose hundreds of thousands
of sharp arrows.

22 O Bharata dexendant!
A terrifying mahā battle took place
between me and the Nivātakavacas,
leading to their destruction.

23 The deva-ṛṣis and mahā-ṛṣis,
the Brahmā-ṛṣis and Siddhas
came and witnessed
the fierce battle.

24 All those *munis*, eager to see me win,
sweetly applauded my victory,
as they did Indra in his victory
over Tāraka.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY

1 Then, O descendant of Bharata,
the Nivātakavacas, fully armed, (continued Arjuna)
rushed headlong at me
to engage in battle.

2 The mahā-chariot-heroes blocked my chariot,
yelling at me
and surrounding me
and rained arrows upon me.

3 Other anti-gods, of mahā-ferocious strength,
brandishing lances and battle-axes,
hurled spears and *bhuśuṇḍi*-pellets
at me.

4 An almost endless volley
of śakti-spears, maces and clubs
kept being pelted
in my direction.

5 Other horrific, gruesome-looking,
expert-in-hurling Nivātakavacas,
carrying sharp weapons and bows,
rushed at me, like horrendous Kāla.

6 I countered with a brisk volley
of swift, straight-flying
Gāṇḍīva-shot arrows,
ten piercing each anti-god.

7 I forced them to retreat
before my stone-sharpened shafts.
The horses, under Mātali's skill,
galloped swiftly,

8 In zig-zag manoeuvres
with the speed of wind;
Mātali's tactics trampled and killed
many of Diti's anti-god sons.

9 That mahā-chariot was harnessed
to a hundred thousand horses,
but Mātali's skill made it appear
that only a few were pulling it.

10 The kicks of their hooves
and the grinding of the wheels of the chariot
and my arrows
killed hundreds of anti-gods.

11 Many, even in death, clutched their bows.
Their charioteers killed,
they were pulled away
by panicking horses.

12 Those expert in counter-attack,
obstruction and pincer movement
combined to crush me.
I was confused,

13 But the marvellous agility of Matali
constantly compelled my admiration
as he steered the horses
with expert ease.

14 O rājā! I released various swift weapons,
and decapitated
hundreds of thousands
of fully arms-equipped anti-gods.

15 O foe-crushing king! The brave charioteer
of Śakra-Indra, Mātali,
saw me employ all my martial prowess,
and he was more than pleased.

16 Some of the anti-gods were mangled
by my chariot and the horses;
others, seeing this,
simply fled.

17 Still others, provoked by the challenge
that I threw at them,
in spite of my arrows
countered with their own.

18 I obscured them with hundreds of thousands
of ornamented,
mantra-inspired arrows
charged with the Brāhma-weapon's potency.

19 The anti-gods,
infuriated by my attacks,
rallied and launched a shower
of clubs, darts and arrows.

20 O Bharata descendant!
I decided to make use of the favourite weapon
of Devarāja-Indra called Mādhavan,
charged with dynamic power.

21 Hurling that weapon,
I splintered into a hundred pieces
the tridents, swords and *tomara*-lances
they flung at me.

22 Having disposed of their weapons,
I angrily
pierced each of the anti-gods
with ten arrows.

23 Arrows sped from my Gāṇḍīva
like swarms of black bees
on the field,
receiving the pūjā-praise of Mātali.

24 And I adroitly sliced off,
with my arrows,
the arrows they shot at me –
again, receiiving pūjā-praise from Mātali.

25 Though repeatedly hit by my arrows,
the Nivātakavacas
encircled me and continued to shoot arrows
at me.

26 But I employed incomparable
flaming anti-weapons
to stem the flow of their arrows,
and cut them down in thousands.

27 Like waters cascading down hill-slopes
in the monsoon,
blood spurting from their bodies
flooded the ground.

28 Harassed and struck by swift, powerful,
straight-speeding arrows
as devastating as Indra's thunderbolt,
the Dānava anti-gods were alarmed.

29 Their bodies chopped into hundreds of pieces,
their weapons pulverised,
their will demoralised,
the Nivātakavacas resorted to māyā-tactics.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-ONE

1 They began with a massive storm of stones
(said Arjuna).
These stones were large as trees,
and I was sorely perplexed.

2 But I shattered them with a counter-volley
network of arrows
that had the energy
of Mahendra-Indra's thunderbolt.

3 When the stones splintered,
flame burst from them;
the fragments disintegrated
like incandescent sparks.

4 The storm of stones being neutralised,
I was overwhelmed
with a torrential downpower
of axle-sized sheets of rain.

5 These massive torrents cascaded from the sky
and seemed to darken
all the directions
and the ten cardinal points.

6 I was stupefied by the combined effect
of the rain,
the screeching wind, and the howling
of the Daitya anti-gods

7 The torrential showers seemed to blanket
the entire region
between earth and sky,
and their impact made me reel.

8 So I released that flaming,
fierce, divine
water-drying weapon of Indra
called the Viśoṣaṇa.

9 O Bharata descendant!
The hail of stones pulverised,
and the rain-sheets dried up.
The anti-gods resorted to wind and fire māyā.

10 The fire I neutralised
with the watery Salila-missile,
and the whooshing wind
with the mahā Śaila-missile.

11 O Bharata descendant!
Seeing that I was effective against all these māyās,
the difficult-to-subdue Dānava anti-gods
produced many others.

12 They let loose a horrendous shower of rocks,
jointly
with fire and wind attacks,
such that I horripilated.

13 It was such a sudden, fierce deluge of māyā
that I wavered.
They created on all sides a total,
shuddersome darkness.

14 Enveloped in that darkness,
which was thick and terror-instilling,
the horses whinnied in fear,
Mātali faltered.

15 His golden whip slipped from his hand.
O bull-brave Bharata,
in his fearful confusion he kept shouting,
"Where are you?"

16 He seemed to have lost his senses.
Fear overcame me also;
He recovered, however,
and said to me:

17 "Defectless one, in the distant past
I witnessed a furious battle, O Pārtha-Arjuna,
waged here between gods and anti-gods
over *amṛta*-nectar.

18 In that unbelievable fierce war
that led to the death of Śambara,
I was the charioteer
of the rājā of gods, Devarāja Indra.

19 I guided the horses
when Vṛtra met his doom,
I witnessed the ghastly clash
with Virocana's son Bali.

20 O Pāṇḍava, I have been personally present
at all these mahā-horrific encounters.
Yet never before
did I lose consciousness.

21 It must be that Pitāmaha Brahmā
has ordained the end of creation.
Why this slaughter
if not for the world's doom?"

22 I heard Mātali, and tried to bolster
my own self-confidence.
I wondered how best to combat
this new mahā-māyā of the Dānavas.

23 I said to terrified Mātali,
"Look at the strength of my arms,
and of my weapons,
and of the Gāṇḍīva.

24 Charioteer, shed your fear, be calm.
I promise today
to disperse their fearful darkness-maya
with my anti-māyā weapons."

25 O lord of men,
immediately I countered their māyā
with my weapons meant for the benefit of the gods,
and capable of stupefying all creation.

26 Their māyā neutralised,
some of the best anti-gods,
who had incalculable prowess,
materialised fresh māyās,

27 As a result of which the world
intermittently revealed itself,
then slid into darkness, then vanished,
then submerged.

28 When it briefly re-manifested itself,
Mātali swung the trained horses
into horripilating strategies
on the battlefied.

29 The desperate Nivātakavacas
rushed headlong at me.
This was my chance:
I despatched them to Yama's realm.

30 Then, it so happened that on the furious battlefield
fatal for the Nivātakavacas
I was unable to see my enemies,
the Dānava anti-gods.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-TWO

1 Arjuna continued: The Daityas fought the battle
from behind the screen of māyā.
I also employed my celestial weapon
of invisibility,

2 Guiding my arrows that I shot
from my Gāṇḍīva;
in this way I succeeded in decapitating
many anti-gods.

3 The Nivātakavacas, confounded by this tactic,
without warning
abandoned their māyā,
and fled to their city.

4 The Daitya anti-gods fled,
and the battle scene was revealed:
hundreds of thousands of Dānavas lay scattered,
dead;

5 Their crunched or shattered weapons,
hundreds of thousands of them,
lay beside them; mangled armour,
mangled limbs;

6 So many corpses piled up there
that my horses
had difficulty lifting their hooves;
suddenly the horses flew upward.

7 The Nivātakavacas, from hidden positions,
had decided
to shower huge rocks
that blotted the entire sky.

8 O Bharata descendant! Other Dānava anti-gods
slipped into the earth's bowels,
and tried to clutch the horses' legs
and drag them down.

9 In the course of the battle,
they seized the horses
and the chariot,
and hurled huge rocks at me.

10 Such a multitude of rocks fell
all around me,
and kept falling,
that I seemed to be caved in.

11 Rocks raining, horses unmoving,
a perilous position
for me and the horses;
Mātali was quick to see this.

12 Seeing me bewildered, he said,
"Arjuna! Arjuna!
Don't be afraid! Shoot the missile
called Vajra!"

13 O lord of men! As soon as I heard him,
I fired the favourite weapon
of the rājā of the gods –
the fearful Vajra-missile.

14 I infused mantras into the Gāṇḍīva
and, aiming at the rocks,
I shot thunderbolt-tipped arrows
and iron darts.

15 Fired from the Vajra,
those arrows turned into thunderbolts
and sliced through the māyā
of the Nivātakavacas.

16 The rock-huge Dānava anti-gods,
dazed by the thunderbolt,
fell flat on the ground,
one on top of the other.

17 The arrows sliced through
the Dānava anti-gods
who had tunnelled into the earth
and seized the chariot and horses.

18 The place was heaped over
with dead Nivātakavacas,
hill-huge ones; some lay wounded,
scattered like rocks.

19 It is the strangest thing indeed
that neither I,
nor Mātali, nor the horses seemed
in the least hurt.

20 O rājā! Mātali said to me with a smile,
"The display of heroism
you have shown today, Arjuna,
even the gods have not shown."

21 The wives of the hosts of dead anti-gods
of that city
began wailing
like cranes in autumn.

22 Accompanied by Mātali, I entered the city,
frightening
the Nivātakavaca-women
with the fearful clatter of the chariot.

23 When they saw the peacock-radiant
ten thousand horses
of the sun-splendid chariot,
the women fled confusedly.

24 Ornaments fell from the bodies
of the terrified women
like hail on a mountain
(said Arjuna).

25 Eventually the traumatised women
of the Daitya anti-gods
entered their golden, gem-encrusted
mansions and palaces.

26 When I beheld that magnificent,
radiant city,
excelling even heaven,
I turned to Mātali:

27 "This city seems to be grander
than the city of Purandara-Indra.
Why don't the gods come
and live here?"

28 Mātali answered: "In fact, Pārtha-Arjuna,
this city was once Devarāja-Indra's.
But the Nivātakavacas expelled the gods
from here.

29 They succeeded in pleasing Pitāmaha-Brahmā
by rigid mahā-tapasyā,
and got two boons – to live here,
and be free from fear of the gods.

30 So Śakra-Indra said to the Self-Born One,
Bhagavān Brahmā :
'Bhagavān, keep our welfare in mind,
and instruct us accordingly.'

31 O Bharata-descendant! Brahmā! instructed Indra thus:
'Destroyer-of-foes Śatruhan,
you will assume another body
and kill the anti-gods.'

32 Which is why Śakra-Indra handed you
these weapons
to destroy the anti-gods.
You did what the gods could not.

33 O Bharata descendant, you have come here
at just the right time.
That is why you have been able
to kill them.

34 O Indra-among-mortals, it was to destroy
these Dānava-anti-gods.
that Mahendra-Indra bestowed on you
these powerful weapons."

35 After killing the Dānava anti-gods
and capturing their city,
I returned to heaven,
accompanied by Mātali.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-THREE

1 While returning (continued Arjuna),
I saw a divine city,
seemingly floating,
dazzling like fire or the sun,

2 With trees made out of jewels,
and sweet-singing multi-coloured birds,
where the Paulomas and Kālakuñjas
sported.

3 It had four main gats,
many smaller ones, and towers –
it was impregnable –
it was supernatural,

4 With all its jewel-trees
which had fruits and flowers,
and all its lovely, mind-haunting
feathered creatures,

5 With happy anti-gods living in it,
all of them
wearing garlands, and carrying maces,
swords, darts, bows, and clubs.

6 O rājā! Looking at the incredible city
of the Daitya anti-gods,
I marvelled, and said to Mātali:
"Tell me about this wonderful city."

7 "A Daitya anti-god girl," said Mātali,
"named Pulomā
and a mahā-anti-goddess Kālakā,
practised severe tapasyā
for a thousand god-years.

8 When the tapasyā concluded,
Self-Born Svayambhu Brahmā
granted them boons –
one, their children would suffer little;

9 Two, they would live in an incomparably lovely,
mahā-resplendent city
that floated in the sky;
and, O Indra-among-rājās,
three, neither god, anti-god, nor Pannaga
would harm them;

10 Also, the city would be impregnable
to attacks by yakṣas,
mahā-ṛṣis, gandharvas, Pannagas,
gods and anti-gods,

11 And would possess all desirable objects,
and be free of sorrow and disease.
Created by Brahmā for the Kālakeyas,
O finest of the Bharatas,

12 This is that celestial city –
you will see no gods here –
it is inhabited solely by Pauloma and Kālakeya
Dānava-anti-gods.

13 This mahā-glorious city
is called Hiraṇyapura;
it is guarded by mahā-antigods,
Kālakeyas and Paulomas.

14 O Indra-among-rājas!
They live here in peace and joy,
immune from attack by the gods,
free from worry, all wishes fulfilled.

15 Brahmā had once decreed
that mortals should kill them;
therefore, destroy quickly these Kālakeyas
with your mahā-powerful Vajra-missile."

16 When I heard, O lord of the earth,
(Arjuna continued)
neither gods nor anti-gods could kill them,
I said to Mātali, "Rush to the city;

17 I will today destroy these enemies
of the gods.
All wicked enemies of the gods
I consider as my victims."

18 Mātali swiftly drove me
in the divine chariot pulled by horses
to the vicinity
of Hiraṇyapura.

19 As soon as they spotted me,
Diti's sons, in wonderfully varied robes,
riding in chariots,
furiously attacked.

20 The Indra-like Dānava anti-gods of enormous prowess
rushed at me angrily
with arrows, battle-axes, two-edged swords
and hatchets.

21 But I was confident
of my mahā-skill in weapons, O rājā,
and I held them with a shower
of sharp arrows.

22 I zig-zagged in my chariot through the air,
baffling the Dānavas.
In their confusion,
they began slaughtering each other.

23 My flame-mouthed arrows
cut off the heads
of hundreds of those who were lost
in that confusion.

24 Decimated by my attack,
the Daitya anti-gods hid in the city,
then rose skywards,
employing Dānava antigod-māyā.

25 But I intercepted their flight,
O Kuru descendant,
with a timely volley of arrows
blocking the path of the Daityas.

26 But they had the boon protecting them;
so Diti's sons
survived in the celestial, sun-radiant,
ethereal sky city.

27 It seemed to soar gracefully up,
then plummet down,
then re-soar; then it curved off;
then submerged.

28 O foe-chastiser! That magnificent city,
like Amarāvati itself,
self-propelled as it were,
reeled under my attacks.

29 O bull-brave Bharata,
I showered on that city
and on its Daitya anti-gods.
countless divinely-shot arrows.

30 O rājā! Pierced and buffeted
by my straight-speeding arrows,
the anti-god city tottered and plunged
to the ground.

31 O rājā! The anti-gods,
wounded by my straight-speeding arrows
as swift as thunder and Kāla-propelled,
wandered in a daze.

32 Mātali seemed to jerk forward
and leap up;
and the sun-resplendent chariot
landed on the earth.

33 O Bharata descendant!
Eager to grapple with me,
the anti-gods surrounded me
with sixty thousand chariots;
I repulsed their vulture-feather-
adorned arrows.

34 The fighting raged
like billows on the ocean.
Realising that I could not destroy them
by mortal tactics,

35 I decided to take recourse
to divine missiles;
but the thousands of weapons
used by their chariot-heroes

36 Baffled even my divine weapons.
I saw hundreds of thousands
of mahā-powerful anti-gods,
riding

37 In chariots in the most complicated manoeuvres;
they wore varied helmets
embossed armour,
they had lovely flags,

38 And the glitter of their ornaments
blinded my eyes.
Through I continued to hurl arrow-swarms
at them,

39 I could not overcome them;
this worried me.
Hemmed in by the war-skilled,
well-armed enemy,

40 I was temporarily nonplussed,
I shook with fear in that mahā-battle.
Collecting my courage,
I invoked the gods' god, Rudra-Śiva,

41 "May all go well for all!"
Saying this,
I lifted that terrible all-foe-destroying mahā-missile.
I namaskāra-ed and praṇāmed mahātmā Śiva.

42 I had a vision
of a three headed, nine-eyed,
three-faced, six-armed being,
hair flaming like the sun.

43 O foe-chastiser,
the only clothes he had on
were massive snakes
with long, gently flickering tongues.
Seeing the awesome eternal Śiva,
my fear dissipated.

44 O bull-brave Bharata! I fitted the Śiva-weapon
to my Gāṇḍīva bow;
I namaskara-ed three-eyed Sarva-Śiva
of fathomless force,

45 And I shot that weapon
aimed at the destruction
of the Indra-like Dānava-anti-gods.
It assumed a thousand shapes –

46 Such as, O lord of the earth,
deer, lions, tigers,
bears and buffaloes and snakes,
also cows,

47 *Śarabha*-leogryphs and elephants
and monkeys and bulls and boars-and cats,

48 Dogs, spirits, *bhuruṇḍas,*
vultures, Garuḍas, and yak-oxen,

49 Gods, ṛṣis, gandharvas,
piśācas, yakśas, and god-foes,

50 Guhyakas in battle, Nirṛtas,
elephant-mouthed whales, owls,

51 Fish-and horse-shaped creatures,
variously armed,
and rākṣasas wielding
fierce maces and clubs.

52 The universe seemed to be filled
with these multitudinous beings
as soon as I fired
my divine weapon.

53 These creatures of all sizes and shapes
and blubber and flesh
and bone and marrow,
some three-headed, four-tusked,
others four-mouthed,
others four-armed,

54 Hemmed the Dānava anti-gods in,
and drove them to their destruction.
Then, O Bharata-descendant,
with other arrows

55 That flashed like fire or the sun,
and dazzled like a thunderbolt,
and were fashioned of rock,
I killed the anti-gods.

56 When I saw them mangled by the Gāṇḍīva
falling dead from the sky,
I offered praṇāma
to the Tripura-slayer Śiva.

57 The charioteer of the gods
saw the corpses glittering
in their ornaments on the battlefield,
and was pleased.

58 Because I had performed
this almost incredible feat,
impossible even for the gods,
Sakra-Indra's Mātali pujā-respected me,

59 And, doing *añjali*, exclaimed ecstatically,
"What you have done today
is beyond the power
of gods and anti-gods –

60 Even the lord-of-the-gods Indra
cannot accomplish a similar feat.
This aerial city,
impregnable to gods and anti-gods,

61 Has been obliterated by you,
because you have the strength
born of tapasyā."
With the Dānava anti-gods slain,

62 Their grieving wives emerged
from the houses,
their hair dishevelled,
mourning like ospreys

63 For their sons, fathers, and brothers.
They wailed inconsolably
over their dead lords,
beat their breasts, and collapsed;

64 Their ornaments fell off their bodies.
Filled with piteous cries
of loss and lamentation,
bereft of beauty,

65 Was the city of the anti-gods
which once resembled
the city of the gandharvas –
a city without lords,

66 Like a lake without elephants,
like a forest with dead trees.
And so it ended.
Mātali, pleased, drove me,

67 Eminently successful in my goal,
to the realm of the rājā-of-the-gods Indra.
Having razed Hiraṇyapura
and killed the mahā-antigods,

68 I returned to Śakra-Indra,
and Mātali narrated the whole episode
in detail to the lord-of-the-gods
Devendra-Indra in heaven.

69 Hearing of the way I destroyed Hiraṇyapura,
and repulsed
the anti-gods' māyā,
from the lips of Mātali,

70 Thousand-eyed Bhagavān Purandara-Indra
was impressed
with the total destruction
of the fierce Nivātakavacas,

71 And, pleased, he and the Maruts said,
"Sādhu! Sādhu!
Excellent! Excellent!"
The rājā of the gods kept encouraging me

72 And finally said these sweet inspiring words:
"Your feat today
surpasses any deed of the gods
and the anti-gods.

73 By destroying my mahā powerful enemies,
Pārtha-Arjuna, you have paid the guru-fee,
You will always be calm in battle,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,

74 And shoot your missiles with perfect composure.
Neither gods,
Dānavas nor rākṣasas
will defeat you.

75 No yakṣas, anti-gods, gandharvas,
no birds or Pannaga-serpents
will be able to face you on the battlefield,
O son of Kuntī.

76 Dharmātmā-son-of-Kuntī Yudhiṣṭhira,
with the help
of the strength of your arms,
with rule the earth."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FOUR

1 The rājā-of-the-gods Indra placed full trust in me;
(Arjuna continued)
seeing me wounded, he consoled me
and said:

2 "All the divine weapons are now
in your hands; O Bharata-descendant;
no mortal on earth
can now vanquish you.

3 My son, when you take up arms,
Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa,
Karṇa, Śakuni and others will not equal
one-sixteenth of you."

4 *Prabhu* Maghavat-Indra gave me
this shining, impregnable divine armour
which protects the body,
this gold garland,

5 This conch-shell Devadatta,
which produces ear-splitting noise.
And he personally placed this diadem
on my head.

6 He also presented me
with all these priceless,
exquisite divine dresses
and these celestial ornaments.

7 Offered pūjā-respect in these ways, O king,
I stayed happily
in the realm of Indra
with the gandharva children.

8 Śakra-Indra, pleased, said to me
in the presence of the gods:
"Arjuna, it is time for you to leave.
Your brothers await you."

9 During the five years, O Bharata descendant,
that I spent in the realm of Indra,
I never forgot the ruin
that gambling brought on us, O king;

10 And, finally, I saw you
and my other brothers
on one of Gandhamādana's lower summits
(ended Arjuna).

11 "You are fortunate," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"to get these weapons, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
fortunate to get a chance to please the rājā,
the lord of the gods,

12 Fortunate, O foe-chastiser,
to get of glimpse of Bhagavān Sthāṇu-Śiva
and his Devī, fortunate to please him
with your war-skills.

13 You are fortunate to have been able
to meet the Lokapāla world-guardians.
Your good fortune has brought us prosperity,
O finest of the Bharatas.

14 Today I can be confident that this devī,
this entire city-ornamented earth, is won,
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons humbled,
O bull-brave Bharata!

15 Now, O Bharata descendant,
I would like to see the divine weapons
with which you destroyed
the valiant Nivātakavacas"

16 Arjuna replied, "Tomorrow morning
I will display before you
all the weapons that helped me destroy
the fierce Nivātakavacas."

[III:174:17; 175:1-7]

Transcreated by P. Lal

17 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna narrated his experiences
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
and passed the night happily
with his brothers.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: The night passed:
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira awoke
and performed the customary morning rituals
with his brothers.

2 Yudhiṣṭhira said
to joy-of-his-mothers Arjuna:
"Kuntī's son, demonstrate the weapons
that killed the Dānava anti-gods"

3 O descendant of Bharata,
asked by Yudhiṣṭhira,
Arjuna displayed all the divine weapons
given by the gods.

4 First mahā-radiant Arjuna
had a purificatory bath;
then he namaskāra-ed three-eyed Śiva
as well as Vāsava-Indra;
the mountain-poled, hill-base-axled,
bamboo-socketed

5 Chariot he then climbed into,
clad in armour that dazzled.
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna looked
incomparably lustrous.

6 Holding the Gāṇḍīva bow
and the conch Devadatta
presented by the gods,
handsome Kaunteya Arjuna was about

7 To display them, along with various
other divine weapons
which he had collected
from different deities,

8 When the earth, pressed by his feet,
trembled;
the trees and rivers shook,
the ocean shuddered,

9 The mountains cracked,
wind stopped blowing,
sun stopped shining,
fire stopped burning;

10 The twice-born were unable
to chant the Vedas.
O Janamejaya! The creatures who lived
in the bowels of the earth,

11 Oppressed, emerged with harassed faces,
and stood there,
doing *añjali* and quaking,
in front of Pāṇḍava Arjuna.

12 Terrified by those weapons,
they supplicated Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
to protect them.
The Brahmā-ṛṣis, Siddhas and mahā-ṛṣis,

13 And all moving creatures hurried
to that place.
The most illustrious of god-ṛṣis,
the gods themselves,

14 The yakṣas, rākṣasas, gandharvas,
feathered creatures,
sky-roaming creatures –
all of them gathered there.

15 Pitāmaha Brahmā,
the world-guarding Lokapālas,
Bhagavān Mahādeva Śiva and all his followers,
gathered there.

16 Mahārāja, the wind-god Vāyu
brought varied flowers
and scattered them on and around
Pāṇḍava Arjuna.

17 O rājā! On instructions from the gods,
the gandharvas
sang haunting melodies,
and the apsarās danced.

18 Simultaneously, Nārada,
sent by the gods,
arrived,
and said these ear-soothing words:

19 "Arjuna, Arjuna, do not fire these weapons.
O Bharata descendant.
They are not meant to be discharged
when there is no proper target.

20 Even when there is a target,
they should be used only in an emergency.
Wrong use, O Kaurava descendant,
is a mahā-crime.

21 If, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
you know how and when
to use these missiles,
you will achieve undoubted happiness.

22 If, however, they are used improperly,
O Pāṇḍava-Arjuna,
they will destroy the three worlds,
Never attempt this again!

23 Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira, you who have no enemies,
you will see these weapons demonstrated
only when Pārtha-Arjuna employs them
to destroy your enemies."

24 O bull-brave hero, after preventing Arjuna
from demonstrating the missiles,
the gods and other beings
returned to their realms.

25 After they had all left, O Kaurava Janamejaya,
the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
recommenced cheerfully
their life of exile in the forest.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-SIX

1 "After the great chariot-warrior Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
returned from the Vṛtra-slayer Indra's abode,"
asked Janamejaya,
"what did all the Pāṇḍavas do?"

2 The Pāṇḍavas, all brave
as Indra, with Arjuna
(said Vaiśampāyana),
sported in the gardens
of Dhaneśvara-Kubera
in the woods of Gandhamādana.

3 Inspired by the lovely
tree-abundant gardens,
the great hunter Kiriṭin-Arjuna,
who specialised in arms,
ranged far and wide
with bow and arrow.

4 O rājā! Those scions of royalty,
enjoying through the kindness
of Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera,
neglected to consider
the well-being of others,
being happy with themselves.

5 The Pāṇḍavas with Arjuna
spent four years there –
it seemed like one night.
First six and now four –
a total of ten years
passed in that forest.

6 Sitting with Yudhiṣṭhira,
Arjuna and the twins
(all looking like gods),
the brave son of Vāyu, Bhīma
earnestly spoke
these sweet and noble words:

7 “O rājā of the Kauravas,
we will stand by your promise
and further your plans;
we will refrain at this time
from killing Duryodhana
and all his followers,

8 Though he is guilty
of destroying our happiness,
though he has sent us
to eleven years’ exile.
We will live happily
and deny him the gloating.

9 Acting on your orders,
we have passed our days
not too far from our foes,
giving the impression
that we will never leave
for distant regions.

10 If we go and conceal
ourselves for a full year
and then wreak vengeance,
we should be able
without much effort
to totally uproot

11 Suyodhana-Duryodhana and his followers.
Be sensible, O Dharmarāja!
If we stay on here,
in this lovely heaven,
all we will get
is balm for our grief.

12 But the fragrance of your fame
will no longer flourish, O Bharata,
in this fixed-and-moving world.
If, however, you regain
the kingdom of the Kauravas,
glory will be yours.

13 And if that is done, O Indra-among-men,
you will also possess
the delights of Kubera.
Think then, O Bharata-descendant,
and focus your energies
on the doom of your enemies.

14 The fact is even Indra,
wielder of the thunderbolt,
is afraid of your prowess.
Even when fighting the gods,
O Dharmarāja,
no weakness is felt

15 By Suparṇa-symbolled Krishna,
and Satyaki, the grandson
of noble Śini,
both wishing your welfare.
As for me, I am
unrivalled, like Arjuna.

16 Just as Krishna and the Yādavas
are intent on your welfare,
so am I, O king.
And as for the twins –
they are known for their strength
and skill in warfare.

17 Our single-minded aim
is the continued promotion
of your wealth and fame.
If we face your foes
on the field of battle,
our duty is to kill them."

18 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
who knew dharma and artha,
did *pradakṣiṇa* around
the mountain of *Vaisravaṇa*-Kubera.
Honouring the lakes and rivers,
and all the rākṣasas,

19 He gazed in the direction
of the path he had taken.
The pure-minded mahātmā,
looking at the mountain,
offered his prayers
to the Indra-among-mountains:

20 "O Indra-among-mountains!
When my task is accomplished,
my enemies routed, my kingdom regained,
grant that I and my friends
may come to you again
and perform tapasyā."

21 Yudhiṣṭhira, surrounded
by his brothers and Brahmins,
retraced his steps,
and was lifted across
the mountain's cataracts
by Ghaṭotkaca and his followers.

22 As they started on their journey,
the mahā-ṛṣi Lomaśa
gave them instructions
as a father to his sons,
and then he departed
to the finest of heavens.

23 Also to advise the tigers-among-men
was ṛṣi Ārṣṭiṣeṇa.
So the Pāṇḍavas proceeded,
seeing, as they went,
numerous enchanting lakes
and forests of tapasyā.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-SEVEN

1 The bull-brave Bharatas,
leaving their abode
on that mountain of cascades
and birds and elephants
and Kinnaras (Vaiśampāyana continued),
regretted their departure.

2 However, when they came
to cloud-white Kailāsa,
the mountain closest
to the heart of Kubera,
the bull-brave Bharatas
recovered their happiness.

3 Those excellent heroes,
carrying bows and arrows,
noticed as they went
high slopes and defiles,
many caves of lions,
many rocky causeways,

4 Numerous waterfalls,
occasional flat lands,
mahā-forest after forest
abounding in deer
and birds and elephants, –
and they were enchanted.

5 The most entrancing forests,
rivers and lakes,
caves and hide-outs –
these were the camps,
day and night,
of the bull-brave Bharatas.

6 Pausing in often
inaccessible terrain,
crossing Kailāsa
of incomparable glory,
they reached the inspiring
āshram of Vṛṣaparva.

7 Rājā Vṛṣaparva's welcome
refreshed their tiredness;
they rested and recovered,
and told him the story
of their varied experiences
in the hill-regions.

8
They passed a happy night
in that sacred āshram
of gods and mahā-ṛṣis.
The heroes proceeded
to the jujube-tree Viśāla
for the next stage.

9
In the site of Nārāyaṇa,
the sorrowless mahā-experiencers
spent their time in joy,
near the lake of Kubera,
visited by the gods
and by perfected mortals.

10
The ungrieving Pāṇḍavas,
coming to that lake,
found unalloyed happiness,
as Brahmin ṛṣis do
when they find refuge
in the gardens of Nandana.

11
Spending a full month
happily in Badari,
the heroes proceeded
to Subāhu's kingdom,
the land of the Kirātas,
by the route of their choice.

12
Crossing the territories
of Cīna, Tuṣāra and Darada
in the land of Kulinda,
storehouse of jewels,
crossing the Himālayas,
they came to the capital.

13
Learning of the arrival
of kings' sons and grandsons,
Rājā Subāhu joyfully
hurried to receive them.
The bull-brave Kauravas
reciprocated his greetings.

14 Meeting rājā Subāhu,
and joined by their charioteers
led by Viśoka,
and all their attendants
led by Indrasena,
and the kitchen servants,

15 They spent a night there
in full peace of mind.
Dismissing Ghaṭotkaca,
they rode in their chariots
to the rājā of mountains
in Yamunā's vicinity.

16 On that mountain of waterfalls,
where white snow turbaned
saffron and grey,
in the Viśākhayūpa forest,
these greatest of heroes
dwelt for a while.

17 This forest abounded in lions
and boars and birds,
like the Citraratha mahā-forest.
The excellent hunters
lived peacefully there
for one full year.

18 There, in a cave,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
came across a snake
afflicted with hunger,
fearful like Death.
And Bhīma was afraid.

19 But dharma-strong Yudhiṣṭhira
succeeded in freeing
Vṛkodara-Bhīma from the coils
of that gigantic snake,
which had wound itself
around Bhīma.

20 The twelfth year the Pāṇḍavas,
practising archery and tapasyā,
left the forest that looked
like the Citraratha forest;
they blazed with the glory
of self-restrained mortals.

21 They made their way towards
the edge of the dry area,
and from there to the banks
of the Sarasvatī river;
from there they went
to lake Dvaitavana.

22 As they approached Dvaitavana,
the people who lived there,
engaged in tapasyā
and severe self-discipline,
practising samādhi,
subsisting on foods
hand-crushed by stones,
hurried to meet them
with grass-mats and water.

23 On Sarasvatī's banks
were fig-tree and red berry,
the cane and the jujube,
catechu and *śiriṣa*,
bilva, iṅguda, pilu,
śami and *karīra.*

24 The god-like Pāṇḍavas roamed
on the banks of the Sarasvatī,
beloved of the yakṣas,
gandharvas and maharṣis,
looking like heaven itself
It was bliss to be there!

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-EIGHT

1 "O muni," asked Janamejaya,
"why was ten-thousand-elephant-strong Bhīma
so terrified
of that snake?

2 He once proudly challenged
even the son of Pulastya, Kubera,
to a duel, and slaughtered
yakṣas and rākṣasas

3 In the lotus-lake. Yet you say
that the foe-destroyer was afraid.
You have roused my curiosity:
now satisfy it."

4 O rājā! Travelling from the āshram
of rājarṣi Vṛṣaparva, (replied Vaiśampāyana)
the expert archer Bhīma entered
the wondrous Dvaitavana forest;

5 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
armed with bow and sword,
came to that god-and-gandharva-visited
enchanting forest.

6 From there were visible
the sacred Himālayas,
inhabited by deva-ṛṣis, Siddhas,
and apsarās;

7 Resonant with the happy songs
of partridge-*cakora*, *upacakra*,
pheasant-*jīvajīvaka*, kokila, *bhṛṅgarāja*-bumblebees,
and so many other birds;

8 Full of soothing shady trees,
perennially fruited and flowered;
soft snow in places,
pleasing mind and eye.

9 He saw small hill streams
with snow-sparkling water
the colour of lapis lazuli,
filled with *haṁsa*-swans and *kāraṇḍava*-ducks.

10 He saw large forests of deodar
like nets to trap clouds;
also *tuṅga* and *kāliya*
and yellow sandalwood.

11 The mahā-powerful Pāṇḍava,
roaming on the slopes and flat lands,
killed many game beasts
with unpoisoned arrows.

12 Famed mahā-powerful Bhīma
endowed with the strength
of a hundred elephants,
crushed huge lions to death;

13 He also killed many other animals,
including boars and buffaloes.
Mahā-armed Bhīma's hunting skill
was prodigious:

14 Mahā-powerful Bhīma had the strength
of a lion, a tiger,
a hundred elephants, and an equal number
of strong men.

15 He uprooted and smashed trees
with a flourish of violence,
shaking earth, forest,
and all things near.

16 He battered at hilly crags,
he felled trees,
and with his lion-roars
he terrified all;

17 He jumped and shouted;
he clapped his hands;
he struck his arms; he roared vociferously
again and again.

18 His arrogance and fearlessness
seemed limitless.
Even the mahā-powerful elephants
and mahā-powerful lions,

19 Terrified by Bhīma's raucous shouts,
abandoned their lairs.
Sometimes running,
sometimes sitting, or resting,

20 Bhīma wandered in that fearsome forest
with absolute impunity.
Formidable and reckless like a tiger
he roamed,

21 As forest-dwellers do.
As soon as he set foot
in the mahā forest,
mahā-powerful Bhīma yelled fiercely,

22 Stupefying all creatures who lived there.
The snakes,
alarmed by the shouting of Bhīma,
slithered away,

23 But he pursued
and overtook them.
Then the mahā powerful Bhīma,
who was like the lord of gods,

24 Saw a gruesome snake –
of massive size –
curled up in a mountain cave,
blocking the entire entrance.

25 Its body seemed to be mountainous,
it looked incredibly powerful;
its skin was turmeric-coloured,
speckled with black;

26 Its mouth gaped like a cavern;
it had four fangs;
its coppery eyes glared,
it licked the corners of its mouth.

27 A terror to all creatures!
It looked like Kāla-Antaka-Yama Death.
Its hisses were warnings to intruders
to stay away.

28 Bhīma approached near enough
for the goat-gulping snake
to coil itself viciously
round both his arms.

30 Surpassing the strength of all,
Bhīma's arms
had the strength
of ten thousand large elephants.

31 But, caught in the coils
of that great snake,
Bhīma could not move at all:
he was helpless.

32 So constricting was the grip
(because of the boon)
that mahā-armed and lion-shouldered Bhīma's energies
drained away.

33 He did his best
to extricate himself,
but no matter how hard he tried,
heroic Bhīma failed.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-NINE

1 Overpowered by the snake (continued Vaiśampāyana),
energetic Bhīma
began to wonder
about the reptile's incredible strength.

2 He said to the mahā-snake,
"Best of reptiles,
tell me who you are
and what you intend doing to me.

3 I am Pāṇḍava Bhīmasena,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira brother.
How is it that I,
who have the strength
of ten thousand elephants,
have succumbed to your power?

4 I have killed hundreds of lions,
with and without manes,
tigers, buffaloes and elephants
all at one stroke.

5 Even the mahā-powerful rākṣasas,
O excellent reptile,
piśācas and Pannaga-serpents,
are unable to withstand me.

6 What special skill do you have –
or is it a boon you possess
that you have succeeded
in overpowering me?

7 It seems to me that human strength
is useless,
since you have me completely
in your power."

8 Even as brave Bhīma
said these words,
the snake tightened his grip.
on the Pāṇḍava.

9 The snake had mahā-muscled Bhīma
trapped in his coils,
but allowed him freedom of his muscular arms,
saying,

10 "O mahā-armed creature, I am hungry.
My god has fated you as my food.
All creatures must have food.
What is life without food?

11 O foe-chastiser,
let me tell you today
how I happen to be in this snake-form,
Listen, good man:

12 The wrath of some learned holy men
has reduced me to this plight.
Wishing to expiate the curse,
I tell you this.

13 Everyone has heard of the rāja-ṛṣi Nahuṣa;
you must have too.
He was one of your ancestors –
Āyu's son.

14 I am he.
Because I slighted some Brahmins,
Agastya cursed me –
and you can see the plight I am in.

15 Though you are my descendant,
a goodlooking one,
though I should not be eating you,
fate leaves me no choice.

16 O excellent mortal, cow or buffalo
or whatever crosses my path
during the day's sixth part,
becomes my food.

17 O excellent Kaurava,
no inferior snake of little strength
is overpowering you.
It is my boon that holds you.

18 When I was falling from Śakra-Indra's throne
in front of his palace,
I begged the excellent muni Bhagavān Agastya
to free me of the curse.

19 Melting with pity,
the illustrious ṛṣi said to me,
'O rājā, the curse will end
after some time has elapsed.'

20 I plummeted down on earth;
my memory remained intact;
so I am able to recall
all that happened.

21 The ṛṣi added that whoever
would be able to answer correctly
the questions I put,
would be my saviour.

22 'And even if you seize a being
stronger than yourself, O rājā,
he will not be able to free himself,'
he said to me.

23 I heard these kind words
of the good ṛṣi
meant for my good.
Suddenly the twice-born ones vanished.

24 And I found myself,
on account of my very bad karma,
born in a snake-yoni.
O mahā-residant one,
I have lived in a horrible hell all this time,
awaiting liberation."

25 Mahā-muscled Bhīma said to the snake:
"O mahā-reptile,
I am not angry,
I do not blame myself,

26 Because sometimes a man has the power,
and sometimes is powerless,
to bring or avert sorrow or joy.
That should not worry him.

27 After all, who can alter fate
no matter how hard he struggles?
I think that fate is supreme,
human exertion futile.

28 Look, what else is it but fate
that has today
paralysed the strength of my arms
and made me weak?

29 Today I am not sorry so much for myself
as for my brothers,
exiled from their kingdom
into this forest.

30 This high mountain is inaccessible,
it is inhabited
by yakṣas and rākṣasas.
They will search dejectedly for me.

31 They will hear of my death, and give up all activity,
though they are firm in dharma.
It was I who used bitter words
to provoke them to action.

32 Arjuna may not grieve too much:
he is intelligent,
he knows the use of weapons
gods, gandharvas and rākṣasas cannot repulse.

33 Arjuna is so mahā powerful that he can singlehanded
with his muscular arms
dislodge the rājā-of-the-gods Indra
from his throne;

34 So he will have no problem
in defeating Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son,
arrogant, ignorant, swindling,
world-despised Duryodhana.

35 But I feel sorry for my sad mother
who loves her children,
and wishes them
the best in the world.

36 Tell me, snake, won't all the hopes
that poor helpless lady
has in me collapse
when I am crushed to death?

37 The twins Nakula and Sahadeva,
proud of me,
protected by me, always treating me
as their elder, their guru –

38 Won't my death dishearten them,
and drain
their strength and courage?
That, at least, is what I think."

39 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara Bhīma kept pleading
is this manner.
But he could do nothing to free himself
from the snake's coils.

40 Yudhiṣṭhira, Kuntī's son,
in the meantime,
saw some inauspicious omens,
and was deeply troubled.

41 He saw the horizon points flaming.
A she-jackal slipped
into the south of the āshram,
and howled weirdly.

42 A horrendously ugly *vartikā*-quail,
with one leg,
one eye and one wing, faced the sun,
and vomited blood.

43 The wind seemed to suck in dust;
it blew in dry gusts,
vehemently.
Southern birds and beasts screamed.

44 From the back black crows cawed,
"Go! Go!"
Yudhiṣṭhira's right hand shook involuntarily,
continuously;

45 His heart palpitated
and his left leg throbbed;
his left eye, intuiting calamity,
began twitching.

46 O Bharata descendant!
Intelligent Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira sensed
some mahā-peril and turning to Draupadī asked,
"Where is Bhīma?"

47 The princess of Pāñcāla replied:
"Vṛkodara-Bhīma left a long time ago."
Mahā-muscled king Yudhiṣṭhira,
with Dhaumya,

48 Left, giving instructions to Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
to look after Draupadī,
and advising Nakula and Sahadeva
to please the Brahmins.

49 Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira left the āshram
and, following the trail of Bhīma's footprints,
began searching
in that mahā-forest.

50 To the west he noticed large herds
of elephants;
there also was the unmistakable imprint
of Bhīma's feet.

51 He saw thousands of deer
and hundreds of lions in that forest,
as he followed
the trail of Bhīma.

52 He saw many trees twisted
by the pressure of Bhīma's thighs,
where the wind-swift hero pursued game
in the forest.

53 Faithful to the trail,
he came to a rough-looking,
waterless and leafless territory,
where dry winds blew,

54 Littered with leaves from thorny bushes,
gravel and tree-stumps;
there, in a mountain cave,
he saw his younger brother
helpless, almost unconscious
in the snake's coils.

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SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY

1 Intelligent Yudhiṣṭhira,
seeing his brother immobile
in the snake's clutches,
(Vaiśampāyana continued) said:

2 "Kuntī's son, what is this?
How did this happen?
Who is this splendid snake
with a hill-huge body?"

3 Bhīma caught a glimpse
of his elder brother,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
and recounted the whole episode.

4 "Ārya, noble brother," said Bhīma,
"this snake has trapped me for his food,
He is the rāja-ṛṣi Nahusa
in a snake-body."

5 "Long-lived snake," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"free my infinitely illustrious brother.
We will provide other food
to fill your hunger."

6 "This royal mortal is in my mouth,"
replied the snake.
"Go back! Do not stay here!
Or I will eat you as well.

7 *Tāta*, my child, it is ordained
that the creature who enters here
becomes my food.
You have ventured far enough.

8 I waited a long time
before I got your brother.
I will not release him.
I do not want other food."

9 "Snake," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"Yudhiṣṭhira asks you to tell him –
Are you god or Daitya anti-god
or really a snake?
And why have you suffocated Bhīma
in your coils?

10 Tell me, what knowledge or possession
will satisfy you?
What food do you want?
What will make you release him?"

11 "O spotless king," replied the snake,
"I was your ancestor,
rājā Nahuṣa, Āyu's son,
sixth in descent from Soma.

12 I gained power over the three worlds
with self-discipline,
tapasyā, Veda-study,
and ritual sacrifices.

13 This mastery and eminence puffed me
with pride.
I rode in a palanquin
carried by thousands of Brahmins.

14 Crazed with success,
I insulted the twice-born,
and so Agastya reduced me to this plight,
O lord of the earth.

15 But I have not lost my memory,
O Pāṇḍava rājā.
And through the grace
of the great mahātmā Agastya,

16 Your younger brother has become my meal
in today's sixth division.
I want no other food,
I will not free him.

17 However, if you agree to answer the questions
I put to you today,
I will release
your wolf-waisted brother Bhīma."

18 Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"Ask to your heart's content.
I will do my best
to give satisfactory answers.

19 Snake-rājā! Perhaps you already know
what Brahmins are supposed to know.
But question me,
and I will answer."

20 "Rājā, Yudhiṣṭhira," said the snake,
"who is a Brahmin?
What should be known? From what you say,
you seem to be wise indeed."

21 “O Indra among snakes,” replied Yudhiṣṭhira,
“the man who has truth, charity,
fortitude, goodness, non-cruelty, tapasyā
and goodwill is a Brahmin.

22 What ought to be known is Brahman,
beyond pleasure and pain;
achieving Brahman takes one beyond grief.
What do *you* think?”

23 “Yudhiṣṭhira,” replied the snake,
“even Śūdras have truth,
charity, absence of anger,
non-cruelty and ahiṁsā
by which the four castes prosper
and which guides ethics.

24 And the experience which you describe
as beyond pleasure and pain –
I do not find any creature living
in such a state, O lord of men.”

25 Yudhiṣṭhira replied,
“The Śūdra who has those qualities
is no Śūdra; a Brahmin without them
is no Brahmin.

26 Snake, it is simple:
the man who has these qualities
is a Brahmin;
the man who doesn’t, is a Śūdra.

27 And, regarding your objection
that the Ideal Knowable
does not exist, because nothing exists
that is without pleasure and pain,

28 It does appear that nothing can exist
without pleasure and pain;
but snake, do consider:
cold is absence of heat, and heat of cold;

29 So could not there be a state
that is the absence of pleasure and pain?
That at least is my opinion.
What do *you* think?”

30 "You assert," continued the snake,
"that a Brahmin
is recognised by certain qualities;
so, rājā, if a man
has these qualities,
how can caste apply to him?"

31 "O mahā-wise mahā-snake," Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"in this world
promiscuous miscegnation makes caste distinctions
virtually impossible.

32 Men of all four castes are intermarrying
and fathering children.
In speech, sexual intercourse, birth, and death,
they are similar.

33 The best proof of this intermixture of castes
can be seen
in a ṛṣi-expression like
'Only sacrifice matters, only yajña.'
The wise have always put character
above all else.

34 A boy's natal ritual is performed
even before his umbilical cord is cut;
on that occasion
his mother is given honout
as Sāvitri,
his father is the ācārya.

35 Every person is a Śūdra
until he studies the Vedas.
Because there was controversy over this,
self-born-Svayambhu-Manu

36 Decreed that if, after performing rites and rituals,
O Indra-among-snakes,
the castes do not learn and acquire character,
then intermixture of castes is inevitable.

37 O mahā-excellent snake,
all I have said is that only the man of culture,
only the man of moral rectitude
can be called a Brahmin."

38 "Yudhiṣṭhira," said the snake,
"I have listened carefully.
You know what should be known.
How can I now devour your brother?"

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-ONE

1 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "You know the Vedas
and Vedāñgas so well
that I want you to tell me
what karma leads to the ultimate goal."

2 The snake replied, "O Bharata descendant!
My view is that charity to the deserving,
loving-speech, truthfulness, and non-violence
lead to heaven."

3 "Which is better, O snake," asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
"truth-speaking or charity?
Is ahiṁsā superior
to loving-speech?"

4 "Truth-speaking, charity, non-violence,
and loving-speech
are graded according to the benefit
that each brings.

5 There are times when truth-speaking
is superior to charity.
There are times when charity is preferable
to truth-speaking.

6 Lord of the earth, O Indra-among-rājās,
ahiṁsā is sometimes better
than loving-speech;
sometimes loving-speech is preferable.

7 It all depends on the situation
and the greater benefit.
O rājā! If you have any other questions, ask;
I will answer."

8 "Tell me, snake," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"how does the disembodied individual
go to heaven, enjoy or suffer karma?
This I want to know."

9 "O rājā," replied the snake,
human deeds produce karma,
making humans born as mortals, or in heaven,
or among the lower animals.

10 Charity, ahiṁsā, absence of sloth,
and persistent pure activity
take one from the earth
to the realm of heaven.

11 The opposite gets one re-born as human or as animal.
O Indra-among-rājās!
It is specially mentioned
in connection with this subject,

12 That the man who gives in to lust,
anger, violence and greed
falls from the human level
to the animal,

13 And, it is said, can move up
from animal to human:
cows, horses and other animals can get
the status of deities.

14 *Tāta*! Child! This is how a man's karma
determines his transmigration.
Everything however,
reposes in the ātman, O king.

15 *Tāta*! Child! The karma-fettered body-trapped ātman,
subject to pleasure and pain,
gets repeatedly born.
The free-from-karma-fruit ātman
witnesses the varying karmas
of all creatures."

16 "Tell me, snake," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"slowly and clearly,
how the ātman experiences
sound, touch, form, smell, taste.

17 Mahā-thinking one, don't the physical senses
simultaneously feel sense-pleasures also?
Explain to me how this happens,
finest of snakes."

18 "Long-lived one," replied the snake,
"the ātman shelters in the body
and, through the senses,
experiences the phenomena of life.

19 O bull-brave Bharata!
Perception, the mind and the intellect
help the ātman to experience sense-objects,
and are called the Causes.

20 *Tāta*! Child! The ātman utilises the sense-organs –
the actual receivers of sensations –
to experience
physical phenomena.

21 The limited mind of creatures, O tiger among men,
is the chief experiencer,
so total simultaneous experience
is not possible.

22 O tiger-among-men,
the ātman, from between the eyebrows,
propels high and low intellect
to sense-objects.

23 O tiger-among-rājās,
the knowledge that wise men obtain
from the activity of the mind
reflects the power of the ātman."

24 Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"Explain to me the nature
of the mind and intellect;
knowing that helps one to know the ātman."

25 "*Tāta*! Child! Lack of discrimination makes the ātman
slave to the intellect," said the snake.
"Intellect, inferior to the ātman,
then influences and guides the ātman.

26 Mind depends on sense-perception,
intellect is self-existent;
mind, not intellect, experiences feelings
of pleasure and pain.

27 Child, this is the basic distinction
between *manas*-mind and *buddhi*-intellect.
You of course know all this.
What do *you* think?"

28 "Aho! Most excellent of the intelligent,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"you are amazingly percipient.
Why do you ask my opinion,
since you know all
that one should know?

29 If mahā-bewilders me
how delusion could have affected
a man of such good karma,
a heaven-dweller like you."

30 The snake replied,
"Prosperity turns the head
of even the finest intellectual.
Luxury-lovers are the worst affected, I think.

31 I was drunk with my success,
O Yudhiṣṭhira,
and so I fell;
now at last I am using my reason.

32 Tormentor of foes, mahārāja,
you have answered me well.
Talking to you has freed me
from the curse.

33 In the past,
ensconced in my divine chariot,
I roamed the heavens,
swollen with pride.

34 The Brahmā-ṛṣis, gods, gandharvas,
yakṣas, rākṣasas,
Pannagas and all the three worlds
paid me tribute-tax.

35 O lord of the earth!
My eyes had such mystic power
that whoever I looked upon
was instantly drained of all his energy.

36 Thousands of Brahmā-ṛṣis carried
my palanquin.
O rājā! This is what finally led
to my downfall from heaven.

37 One day, when the muni Agastya
was carrying my planquin,
my feet touched his body.
He cursed me: 'Become a snake!'

38 Instantly I fell out of the palanquin.
I found that I was drifting down,
with my head
pointing earthwards.
I begged the Brahmin to free me
from the curse.

39 '*Bhagavan!* Revered one!
Pride blinded me. Forgive me.'
He was moved by pity
and said to me as I fell:

40 'Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira will free you
from this curse.
O lord of men, when this detestable crime
of pride

41 Exhausts its fruits, then, mahārāja,
you will enjoy the fruits of your goodness.'
I was stupefied
at the strength of his tapasyā.

42 That is why I have placed
these questions before you
about Brahman and Brahmins.
Truth, self-control, and charity,
non-violence, tapasyā,
and the practice of dharma –

43 Not caste and not family –
are the means to perfection.
Here is your mahā powerful brother Bhīma.
Mahārāja, *svasti te-astu!*
May you proper.
I will now return to heaven.

44 You have done me a mahā-favour,
O tiger-among-men Pārtha Yudhiṣṭhira,
because it is your presence
that freed me from the curse."

45 With these words,
king Nahuṣa abandoned his snake-body,
assumed his divine shape,
and returned to heaven

46 In a splendid celestial chariot
that approached,
driven by itself,
with a tempestuous blowing of wind.

47 Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
accompanied by his brother Bhīma
and Dhaumya,
returned to the auspicious āshram.

48 There Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
narrated in precise detail
the entire episode of the snake-encounter
to the assembly of Brahmins.

49 O rājā Janamejaya! They listened;
the Brahmins, his three brothers,
and the celebrated Draupadī
listened spellbound.

50 The excellent Brahmins,
desiring the welfare of the Pāṇḍavas,
advised Bhīma
never to act recklessly again.

51 The Pāṇḍavas were elated to see
mahā-powerful Bhīma return;
all lived there happily,
secure from danger.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-TWO

1 While they were staying there
(said Vaiśampāyana),
the summer-ending, all-creatures-soothing monsoon
arrived.

2 Black mahā-rumbling clouds shrouded
all the points of the sky
and, day and night,
rain fell in torrents.

3 Clouds covered the sky like a dome,
hundreds and thousands of them.
The sun was obscured;
lightning flickered blindingly.

4 And the earth sprouted grass
teeming with flies and reptiles;
the saturated, joy-maddened earth
was a delight to behold.

5 Such a furious flood of rain fell
that one could not make out
the ups and downs;
plants and rivers became a level lake.

6 Summer was over;
and streams swollen with frothing waters
whistled like swift-flying arrows
through the receiving forests.

7 Boars, stags, soaking wet,
sent out varied raucous cries
that could be heard clearly
in the forest.

8 The peacocks, *stotaka*-birds, male kokilas
and gurgling frogs
were all caught up in intoxicated,
frolicking ecstasy.

9 While the Pāṇḍavas roamed in sandy,
dry areas near mountains,
the happy cloud-thick monsoon
came and went,

10 Followed by autumn,
season of *krauñca*-cranes and *haṁsa*-swans,
of green-carpeted forests,
and merrymaking streams.

11 The stars shone lucidly in clear autumn skies,
the land swarmed with wildlife –
an auspicious season
for the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas.

12 Dust-free nights,
cool and gentle
with stars and soft clouds
near the planets and the moon.

13 They saw rivers and tanks
with cool water,
lovely with lily and lotus,
pleasing the eye.

14 They felt such a pleasure
roaming on the banks
of the sacred Sarasvatī –
cane-covered, sky-like expanse of banks.

15 Those expert wielders of the bow
were enchanted
seeing the pellucid waters
of the sacred Sarasvatī.

16 O Janamejaya,
they spent the specially sacred night
of the autumnal full moon in Kārtika
in the āshram.

17 In the company of the merit-laden noble ascetics,
the Pāṇḍavas, finest of Bharatas,
devoted themselves to the practice
of the highest yoga.

18 And when the dark fortnight began,
Pāṇḍu's sons, led by Dhaumya,
with charioteers and cooks,
set out for the Kāmyaka forest.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-THREE

1 O Kaurava Janamejaya! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Arriving in Kāmyaka forest, welcomed by munis,
Yudhiṣṭhira and the Pāṇḍavas
lived there with Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī

2 While the sons of Pāṇḍu
were passing their days in Kāmyaka,
they were approached
by large numbers of Brahmins.

3 One Brahmin said, "We have information
that Arjuna's loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend,
noble-minded, mahā-muscled Śauri-Krishna,
is coming here,

4 Because he knows that the heroes
of the Kuru race
have already arrived.
Hari-Krishna is always eager to meet you.

5 Mārkaṇḍeya, of mahā-tapasyā,
and many ages young,
learned in the Vedas,
will soon come and be with you."

6 He had hardly finished when the Pāṇḍavas
saw Keśava-Krishna arrive
in a chariot pulled by the horses
named Śaibya and Sugriva;

7 Eager to meet the illustrious Kurus,
Devakī's son arrived
with his wife Satyabhāmā,
as Maghavat-Indra arrives with Paulomī-Śacī.

8 Descending from the chariot, wise Krishna,
with customary courtesy, and with joy,
greeted Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira
and hugely powerful Bhīma.

9 Next he offered pūjā-respect to Dhaumya,
and was greeted by the twins.
He embraced curly-haired Guḍākeśa-Arjuna,
and spoke to Draupadī.

10 The foe-chastising descendant of the Dāśārhas,
Krishna, seeing his dear Phālguna-Arjuna
after so long,
embraced him again and again.

11 Satyabhāmā, beloved queen of Krishna,
likewise embraced Draupadī,
beloved wife
of the Pāṇḍavas.

12 The Pāṇḍavas, their wife,
and purohita Dhaumya
offered homage to lotus-eyed Krishna
and gathered around him.

13 In the company of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
the tormentor
of anti-gods Krishna
was like the mahātmā deity
of all life Śiva
with his son Guha-Kārtikeya.

14 Diadem-decorated Arjuna
narrated his experiences
to Krishna,
elder brother of Gada,
and asked about Subhadrā
and Abhimanyu.

15 Slayer-of-Madhu Krishna
courteously greeted
Pārtha-Arjuna and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
and Dhaumya, and praising
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, he sat down
and gave this advice:

16 "The wise have recommended
dharma as ideal
for recovering a kingdom.
Dharma demands tapasyā, O rājā.
Truthfulness and honesty
have guided your sva-dharma,
so you have obtained
control of this world
as well as the next.

17 You studied the scriptures
in the approved manner;
you mastered all weapons;
you accumulated wealth
by Kṣatriya-dharma;
you performed all the rituals.

18 You eschew kāma,
you do not let sexual pleasure
determine your conduct.
O Indra-among-men!
You prefer dharma to wealth.
So you are known as Dharmarāja.

19 In spite of your kingdom,
luxury and wealth,
you have preferred
charity and truth,
tapasyā, śraddhā, wisdom,
forgiveness and patience.

20 Who but you could tolerate
the insult to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
so degrading to dharma,
when she was disrobed
in front of the Kurus
in the palace hall?

21 It seems to me obvious
that you will regain
the rule of your kingdom.
When you exile is over,
we will do our best
to punish the Kauravas."

22 Krishna, chief of the Dāśārhas,
said to Dhaumya, Bhīma,
Yudhiṣṭhira, the twins,
and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī: "How fortunate
Kirīṭin-Arjuna has returned
with full mastery of weapons."

23 Krishna, lord of the Dāśārhas,
and his friends said to Yājñasenī-Draupadī:
"You are fortunate
in being reunited
with happy and healthy
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,

24 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
Yājñasenī, yajña-born lady,
your sons are mild-mannered;
they will study bowcraft,
and learn to their benefit
from noble examples.

25 Your father and brothers
have offered temptations
of kingdom and land,
but the boys are averse
to the luxuries of Drupada
and their maternal uncles.

26 And when they enter
the land of the Ānartas,
in pursuit of arms-lore
in the Vṛṣṇi capital,
they do not crave
for celestial delights.

27 And Subhadrā is careful
in giving them training
in manners and conduct,
as you would have done,
as respectworthy Kuntī
would also have done.

28 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, the son
of Rukmiṇī, Pradyumna,
is personal tutor
to Aniruddha, Abhimanyu,
Sunītha, and Bhānu,
and to your sons.

29 Abhimanyu also
is excellent tutor
to your sons in the arts
of mace-fight and sword-play,
charioting and horsemanship,
and many other skills.

30 Rukmiṇī's son Pradyumna,
after training them fully
and blessing their weapons,
delightedly witnesses
the skill of your sons
and of Abhimanyu.

31 O Yājñasenī-Draupadī,
yajña-born lady,
when your sons go to practise,
each is accompanied
by chariots and horses
and countless elephants."

32 Then Krishna said
to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira:
"Let the Dāśārha warriors,
the Kukuras and Andhakas,
obeying your orders,
stay where you order them.

33 Let the Madhu army
with wind-swift arrows,
led by Halāyudha-Balarāma,
with infantry and cavalry
and chariots and elephants,
await your command.

34 Despatch Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and incorrigible ill-doer,
with his friends and followers
to the same doom as Saubha,
and Saubha's lord Śālva.

35 Abide by the promise
you made in the sabhā
of going into exile –
but prepare Hastināpura
to await your return
with the victorious Dāśārhas.

36 Give up your grief,
cast off despondency,
and live where you like –
and when you enter Hastinā
and regain your kingdom,
do it joyfully."

37 Mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
listened to Krishna
Puruṣottama;
he honoured Keśava-Krishna
and, offering *añjali*,
paid this homage:

38 "Keśava-Krishna,
you are the Pāṇḍavas' refuge,
you are the guardian
of Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons.
When the right time comes,
you will keep word.

39 We promised to spend
twelve years in exile.
This we will do.
And when the last year
of concealment is over,
we will seek your help.

40 May you always
think of our welfare!
Keśava-Krishna, the Pāṇḍavas,
in dharma and charity,
with their wives and kinsfolk,
seek your protection."

41 While the lord-of-the-Vṛṣṇis Krishna
and Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira were talking,
wise-in-tapasyā,
thousands-of-years-young

42 Dharmātmā Mārkaṇḍeya arrived at the āshram.
Untouched by signs of age,
immortal, handsome and benign,
ṛṣi of maha-tapasyā,

43 He looked like a youth
twentyfive years old.
When the ṛṣi of many thousand years
appeared before them,

44 The Brahmins, the Pāṇḍavas and Keśava-Krishna
honoured him.
After the illustrious holy one
was comfortably seated,
Krishna, on behalf of the Brahmins
and Pāṇḍavas, said:

45 "The Pāṇḍavas, the Brahmins, Draupadī,
Satyabhāmā and myself
are all eager to hear
your excellent advice.

46 O Mārkaṇḍeya! Enlighten us on the sacred history
of the ancient past,
and the eternal rules guiding
rājās, women and ṛṣis."

47 Vaiśampāyana continued:
Nārada, the celestial ṛṣi of pure ātman,
arrived and met the Pāṇḍavas
seated around Mārkaṇḍeya.

48 Those learned, illustrious men
honoured the mahā-ātmaned ṛṣi
with *arghya*-water
to wash his feet.

49 When he learnt
that they were about to receive advice
from Mārkaṇḍeya,
deva-ṛṣi Nārada gave his approval.

50 Eternal Krishna, who intuitively knows
what is appropriate,
said smiling to Mārkaṇḍeya:
"Brahma-ṛṣi, please proceed."

51 Mārkaṇḍeya of mahā-tapasyā said:
"Some time will be needed.
I have many stories
to narrate."

52 The Pāṇḍavas and the Brahmins
looked at each other,
then at the mahā-muni
dazzling like the noonday sun.

53 Pāṇḍu's son, Yudhiṣṭhira, rājā of the Kurus,
noting mahā-muni Mārkaṇḍeya's desire to speak,
enquired what subjects
he would touch upon.

54 "O mahā-muni! You are unagingly old,
and informed about matters
relating to gods, Daitya anti-gods, mahātmā ṛṣis,
and rāja-ṛṣis.

55 We offer you our respect and worship;
we have long hoped to hear you.
Devakī's son Krishna
is visiting us.

56 I find myself
deprived of happiness,
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's wicked sons prospering,
and I wonder.

57 After all, man does receive
the exact fruits
of his good or bad karma.
Where does God, Īśvara, come in?

58 Finest of knowers of Brahman,
why does man experience joy and sorrow?
Does he get the fruits
in this world or another?

59 Excellent twice-born Brahmin,
do the consequences of good or bad deeds
come in this life –
or after death?

60 O Bhārgava! Do we get the consequences of karma
in this world or in another?
What happens to karma
when a creature dies?"

61 "Finest of eloquent speakers," said Mārkaṇḍeya,
"good questions – and worthy of you.
You know the answers.
But you still ask.

62 Let me explain first how men
feel joy and sorrow
in this world and the next.
Listen to me attentively.

63 Prajāpati, lord of creatures,
first created pure and shining dharma-bodies
for beings
that needed flesh-frames.

64 Illustrious Kuru, these first creatures
had all their wishes granted,
they were Brahmā-beings,
truthful, divine, and pure.

65 They were as excellent as the gods themselves:
they could soar heavenward,
drop to earth,
and roam wherever they wished.

66 They could control their life and death;
they had no problems, no fears;
all their desires
were fulfilled.

67 They could visit the mahātmā gods
and the ṛṣis;
they knew all dharmas, had no envy,
they were self-controlled.

68 Each lived for a thousand years,
had a thousand sons.
As time passed, their powers became restricted
to the earth alone.

69 And they developed lust and anger,
told lies and cheated,
and led ignorant and greedy lives.
After they died,

70 They were born as animals or went to hell.
Repeatedly
their bad karma brought them
into this incredible world.

71 Their hopes, aims, intelligence,
all failed;
fear and sorrow overtook them,
their reason got blurred.

72 They became noted only for their bad karma;
they were born in low families;
disease-prone and wicked-ātmaned,
they terrified others.

73 Their life was brief,
and they tasted the bitter fruits of karma;
they became avaricious, negative-thinking,
and suffered from *bhinna-cetasā* schizophrenia.

74 Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira,
a creature's condition after death
is determined by karma in this world.
Your question about what happens
to the karma of the wise
and of the low-minded,

75 And how and where they collect the fruits
of noble or vicious karma –
listen to what is said
about this.

76 The original flesh-frame of man
fashioned by the Creator
is the storehouse
of good and bad karma.

77 When man discards this fragile flesh-frame,
he transfers into another;
he is never body-less
even for an instant.

78 His karma tails him in that new life
like a shadow,
and that is what determines
his joys and sorrows.

79 The wise realize that inescapable Law
governs every creature,
because none can shake off
good or bad karma.

80 I have explained to you, Yudhiṣṭhira,
what happens
to the low-minded ones.
The wise find the perfect state.

81 They are the men of tapasyā,
learned in the ways of goodness,
they are truthful, assiduous,
caring for their elders,

82 Gentle-mannered, good-natured, patient,
self-controlled and dynamic,
born in respectable families,
and usually possessing auspicious marks.

83 Because they restrain their senses,
they have integrated minds;
because abstemious, undiseased;
because fearless, they are are without anxiety.

84 With wisdom's eyes they perceive –
at the time of birth, mature or premature,
and even when still in the womb –
they perceive ātman-Brahman oneness.

85 These mahātmā ṛṣis,
with their deep intuitive wisdom,
after living in this world of karma,
achieve the god-realm.

86 O rājā! Some men reap fruits through karma,
others by force of fate,
others through chance.
Do not doubt this.

87 Most eloquent of speakers Yudhiṣṭhira,
let me give you an example
of what I think
is the highest good.

88 Some find bliss here, not in the next:
some in the next, not here;
others neither here
nor in the next.

89 Those who have riches,
and wallow in luxury,
O great foe-destroyer,
are slaves of pleasure:
their bliss is here,
not in the next.

90 Those who observe yoga,
study the Vedas,
and practise tapasyā,
discipline their bodies,
keep check on their passions,
and do not kill animals –
the bliss of these men
is in the next world,
and not here.

91 Those who follow dharma,
and in course of time,
through dharma get wealth,
marry, observe rituals,
find bliss in this world
as well as the next.

92 But the fools who have neither
learning nor tapasyā,
nor charity nor interest
in marriage and children,
have bliss neither here
nor in the next.

93 You are strong and energetic,
lustrous, divine;
you have come on earth
for a divine mission;
you are born on earth
to wipe out wrongs.

94 Pleasing the gods
with your glorious feats,
and the ṛṣis and *pitṛs,*
you, the self-controlled,
pure and assiduous,
engaged in devotions,

95 Will attain to the excellent
realm of the gods
with the help of your deeds.
Do not doubt this, O Kuru!
Your present affliction
points to ultimate happiness."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FOUR

1 Pāṇḍu's sons said
to mahātmā Mārkaṇḍeya:
"Tell us about the greatness
of Brahmins."

2 Mārkaṇḍeya of mahā-tapasyā,
bhagavān ṛṣi, mahā-effulgent,
thoroughly learned in all the śāstras,
replied:

3 Once a handsome and energetic
yung Haihaya rājā,
a great subduer of enemies' cities,
went out hunting.

4 He was roaming
in the grass-and-creeper-covered forest
when he chanced upon an ascetic muni
dressed in antelope-skin.

5 He mistook him for a deer,
and killed him.
Then he was stricken with remorse
for his deed;

6 So the lotus-eyed prince
went to the foremost Haihaya rājās
and confessed to them
what he had done.

7 *Tāta*, my child! They listened,
and checked the corpse of the muni
who lived on fruits and roots –
and they became depressed.

8 All of them started enquiries
about whose son the ascetic was,
and they came to the āshram of Tārkṣya-Ariṣṭanemi
of Kaśyapa's lineage.

9 They offered pūjā-respect to the mahātmā-muni
engaged in strict vow-observance.
They stood reverently
while he greeted them.

10 They said to the mahātmā muni,
"We do not deserve your welcome,
because we are guilty
of killing a Brahmin."

11 The Brahmin ṛṣi replied:
"Have you killed a Brahmin?
Tell me where he is –
and observe the power of my tapasyā."

12 They supplied him all the details,
and retraced their steps
to the spot of the murder,
but the body was missing.

13 They searched in vain
and returned embarrassed, as if in a trance.
Hostile city destroyer Tārkṣya-Ariṣṭanemi
said to them:

14 “Is *this* the Brahmin who was killed by you?
Tell me, O kings.
He is my son,
dedicated to the severest tapasyā.”

15 O lord of the earth!
Seeing the ṛṣi in front of them,
they were mahā-surprised and exclaimed,
“This cannot be. It is incredible.

16 How can the dead come back to life?
Is it the power of tapasyā
that has restored
his life?

17 O twice-born one, we want to know,
if you will tell us.”
He replied, “Death has no power over us,
O kings.

18 Let me explain to you,
briefly and logically,
why death is unable
to have power over us.
We follow our sva-dharma.
So we do not fear death.

19 We are men of pure conduct,
not given to laziness,
we perform saṁdhyā-worship,
eat purely, live purely.

20 We first feed our guests
with food and drink,
then our dependents; we eat the leftovers –
we do not fear death.

21 We are peaceable, charitable, patient,
we visit *tīrthas*,
and live in sacred spots;
so we do not fear death.
We associate only with good men,
so we do not fear death.

22 This is only a brief account.
Give up self-importance,
and return to your kingdoms.
Not taint of crime will touch you."

23 O bull-brave Bharata
(Mārkaṇḍeya said),
the rājas offered pūjā-respect to the mahā-muni
and returned happy.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FIVE

1 Now I will tell you more (said Mārkaṇḍeya)
about Brahmin glory and good fortune.
The rājā-ṛṣi Vainya
began a horse-sacrifice.

2 Atri desired to go to Vainya for expensive alms,
but his sense of dharma persuaded him
to give up
his hankering for riches.

3 After deep thought, mahā-radiant Atri
decided to go to the forest.
He called his dharma-devoted wife and sons,
and said to them:

4 "May your minds be directed soon
to the forest,
for we shall attain serene fulfilment
of our desires."

5 His wife,
motivated by a high sense of dharma,
replied, "Why not ask wealth
from mahātmā Vainya?

6 That rāja-ṛṣi, engaged in an *aśvamedha,*
will offer any wealth
asked as alms.
Receiving that wealth,

7 And distributing it
among your sons and attendants,
go where you wish. Dharma-knowers call this
the highest dharma."

8 "My fortune-favoured wife," said Atri,
"mahātmā Gautama has informed me
that Vainya knows dharma and artha,
and is vowed to truth,

9 But the Brahmins around him
are envious of me.
Gautama's words make me reluctant
to go there.

10 For even if I speak words
of excellent dharma-artha-and-kāma
aiming at self-fulfilment,
they will make fun of me.

11 Still, my mahā-wise wife,
your suggestion appeals to me.
Vainya will certainly give me cows
and much wealth."

12 The ṛṣi of mahā-tapasyā said this
and hurried to king Vainya's yajña.
Near the altar
he praised Vainya

13 With benedictory speeches, and said:
"O rājā, you are blessed,
you are the earth's lord,
the supreme king.

14 The munis chant your praises.
None knows dharma like you do."
The mahā-tapasyā ṛṣi named Gautama
flared up and said:

15 "Atri, don't ever speak such silly words again.
You are immature.
Don't you know Mahendra-Indra is the Prajāpati,
the supreme king?"

16 "O Indra-among-rājās!" Atri replied.
"His majesty here is Prajāpati;
he as much guides our destiny as Indra.
You are ignorant, you don't know."

17 "I know well enough," said Gautama,
"you are the one who does not.
You're flattering him
for some reason.

18 You don't know what the supreme Dharma is,
nor do you want to.
You're a stupid child;
old only in years."

19 They began quarrelling like this,
drawing the notice
of the yajña's munis, who whispered,
"Who are these two?

20 Who allowed them to enter
the assembly of Vainya?
What are they shouting for,
what do they want?"

21 The great dharmātmā Kāśyapa
who knew all the ways of dharma,
interrupted and asked
the cause of their quarrel.

22 Gautama said to the assembly
of illustrious munis:
"Most excellent Brahmins,
allow me to explain.

23 Atri here says Vainya guides our destiny.
We·have great doubts."
So the mahātmā munis
immediately hurried

24 To dharma-knowing Sanatkumāra
to settle this dispute.
To remove their doubts, Sanatkumara of mahā-tapasyā
spoke these words of dharma and artha:

25 "Fire helping wind consumes forests.
Brahmin helping Kṣatriya,
or Kṣatriya helping Brahmin,
destroys enemies.

26 A rājā establishes dharma
and protects his subjects.
He is Śakra-Indra, Śukra and Bṛhaspati:
hence a destiny-guider.

27 Who will not worship a person
who is lord-of-creatures' Prajāpati,
'lord-of-earth',
'sovereign', 'emperor',
'redeemer-from-sorrow' and 'lord-of-men'
combined?

28 Moreover, he is also 'the ancient yoni',
'conqueror-of-battles',
'ubiquitous protector',
'the prosperous one',
'the contented one', 'the easily victorious',
'resembling Viṣṇu',

29 'The yoni of truth', 'war-victorious',
'establisher-of-Truth-and-Dharma'.
Fear of a dharma made the ṛṣis
hand over authority to Kṣatriyas.

30 Just as the sun in the god-world
dispels darkness with light,
the king among men
wipes out adharma.

31 The śāstras have recognised
the authority of a rājā.
I must support the view
that exalts kingship."

32 The mahā-minded rājā, pleased with Atri,
the ṛṣi who supported his case
in the dispute,
happily said to him:

33 "Brahmin, you have described me
as the greatest and best of men,
and even compared me
to the gods.

34 For this I will bestow on you
all kinds of wealth
including a thousand ornamented,
dusky maids.

35 I will further give you
a hundred million coins
and ten *bhāras* of gold.
I think you are very learned."

36 Atri, radiant ṛṣi of mahā-tapasyā,
honoured by the king,
gratefully accepted the wealth and,
returning home,

37 He divided it among his sons.
After that,
the serene ṛṣi went to the forest
to practise tapasyā.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-SIX

1 O heroic destroyer of hostile cities
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya),
the goddess Sarasvatī,
questioned by the wise ṛṣi Tārkṣya
in this connection, said something
that I will repeat.

2 "Gracious, lovely-figured goddess,"
asked Tārkṣya,
"how best does a person
pursue sva-dharma?
Tell me this, so that I
remain firm in my dharma.

3 How and when should one offer
oblations to Agni?
How should one offer pūjā.
to be steady in dharma?
Tell me, and rid me
of passionate craving."

4 Addressed by that highly
intelligent ṛṣi
eager for knowledge,
goddess Sarasvatī
said these words of dharma
to the Brahmin Tārkṣya:

5 "He who knows Brahman,
who purely and serenely
pursues perfection,
will surely attain
the realm of the gods
and the bliss of heaven.

6 Many mind-enchanting,
large and holy lakes,
abounding in fish,
golden lilies and lotuses,
can be found in heaven,
like lovely *tīrthas.*

7 Adored by the virtuous
and richly-ornamented
and golden-skinned apsarās,
good men live in peace
on the soothing banks
of these lakes of heaven.

8 The giver of cows
finds the highest realm;
the giver of bullocks
the realm of the sun;
of clothes, the moon;
of gold, the gods.

9 The giver of a lovely
cow and a calf –
a cow easily milked
which does not run away –
will live in the realm
of the glorious gods
for as man years
as one can count hairs
on that gifted cow.

10 The giver of a healthy,
powerful young bullock
able to plough
and carry loads,
gets the realm obtained
by givers of ten cows.

11 When a man gives away
a golden-clothed cow
of the *kapila* breed,
with money and a milk pot,
the cow in the next world
returns to the giver.

12 The giver of cows
gets as many merits
as hairs on that cow,
and redeems his sons,
grandsons and ancestors
up to seven generations.

13 The man who gives
sesamum in the form
of a gold-horned cow,
with money and a milk jar,
easily obtains
the realm of the Vasus.

14 A man's own deeds
make him fall in dark
Dānava-haunted hell,
like a ship sinking
in a stormy sea.
but cow-gifts can save him.

15 The man who gives his daughter
in marriage according
to Brāhma ritual,
or who gives land
and other gifts to Brahmins,
gets Puraṁdara-Indra's realm.

16 The good man who offers
oblations in the fire
for seven years
makes pure by this action
seven generations
in past and future."

17 Tārkṣya asked: "Lovely lady,
tell me the rules of *agnihotṛ*
as explained in the tradition.
I will patiently learn
the time-honoured rules
of the sacred fire."

18 Sarasvatī replied: "The impure man,
with unwashed hands and feet,
the disrespectful one,
should never offer
oblations in the fire.
The gods see within;
they do not accept gifts
from the impure
or those without *śraddhā*.

19 Nor should there be oblations
from those who are ignorant
of the sacred texts;
such men are not worthy
of making offerings;
they are the 'unintroduced'.

20 The truthful and honest,
the ones with *śraddhā*,
the eaters of remnants
from the sacred fire,
go to the realms
of the fragrant cows,

and there they see
the truth of the single
Supreme Deity."

21 "Beautiful lady," said Tārkṣya,
"you are learned in matters
of this world and the next –
the fortune-favoured devī of wisdom!
This I know,
but who really are you?"

22 Sarasvati replied,
"I come from the fire
of *agnihotṛ*
to answer your questions.
The answers I give you
are filled with truth."

23 "There is no one like you,"
exclaimed Tārkṣya.
"You are radiant like Śrī-Lakṣmī.
O devī of wisdom,
to me you appear
as celestial essence."

24 Sarasvatī replied,
"Finest of mortals,
my radiance is born
from the offerings of worshippers
in the sacred fire –
my sole satisfaction.

25 From the heart of the fire
comes the sap of trees,
comes the golden, glittering
variety of earth. O learned one!
The beauty of wisdom
comes from that fire."

26 "Goddess," said Tārkṣya,
"describe that auspicious
ultimate goal,
that sorrowless mokṣa
so deeply desirable.
The mokṣa described

in Sāṁkhya and Yoga –
that ancient mokṣa –
I do not know."

27 Sarasvatī replied:
"The ultimate mokṣa
perfect and sorrowless
is attained through Yoga:
the wise in the Vedas
are aware of this.

28 At its heart is a giant
rattan-cane clump,
fragrant with sanctity,
with thousands of branches;
rivers of honey
flow from its roots.

29 Many are its river-like branches,
which are fruitfully fruitless;
without flesh, it is fleshy;
sweet curd is its mud.

30 Indra, Agni and the wind
strive to realize,
through repeated excellent yajñas,
this supreme goal I offer."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-SEVEN

1 Pāṇḍu's sons Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
said to the Brahmin Mārkaṇḍeya,
"Tell me about Vaivasvata-Manu."

2 O tiger among-men (said Mārkaṇḍeya),
O rājā, once there was a mahā ṛṣi,
Vivasvata's son,
as radiant as Prajāpati.

3 He excelled even his father
and grandfather
in skill, power, fortune,
and even in tapasyā.

4 O lord of men! He stood on one leg
and, arms uplifted,
performed the severest mahā-tapasyā
in the Badari ashram.

5 Head lowered, with unblinking eyes,
he performed
this awesome tapasyā
for ten thousand years.

6 Wet-clothed, matted-haired,
he happened to be doing tapasyā once,
when a fish leapt on the Cīriṇi's bank,
saying:

7 "Revered one, *bhagavan,* I am a helpless little fish.
I fear the large fish.
You are a strong-vowed ṛṣi –
help me.

8 It's the practice with fish
that the big fish
always prey on the small fish.
It's always been so.

9 Save me from the sea of fear
in which I am drowning,
Be kind,
I will repay your goodness."

10 Vaivasvata-Manu heard the fish,
and was stirred by compassion;
he scooped the fish out
with his hands.

11 It had a moon-bright body.
He took it out of the river
and transferred it
to a water-pot.

12 O rājā! Cared for in this way,
the fish kept growing,
and Manu gave it the same attention
he would his own child.

13 A long time passed, and the fish
swelled to such proportions
that it no longer fitted
in the water-pot.

14 Manu heard the fish speak to him again,
"*Bhagavan*, revered one,
find a better place for me to live
than this."

15 Bhagavān Manu removed the fish
from the water-pat
and transferred it
to a large tank.

16 O destroyer of hostile cities!
The fish stayed in that tank
for a long time,
and continued to grow.

17 O lotus-eyed one! The tank was two *yojanas* long
and one *yojana* broad,
but even that space
was insufficient.

18 O son of Kuntī, lord of the earth,
the fish could not even
glide around comfortably in it.
Manu heard the fish speak again:

19 "Kind and noble *bhagavan,*
take me to the Gaṅgā,
the beloved wife of the ocean;
or, *tāta*, dear father, do as you please.

20 Since it is through your goodness
that I have grown so large,
I will gladly do as you say,
O defectless one."

21 The self-controlled bhagavān ascetic
took the fish to the Gaṅgā,
and placed it
in the river-waters.

22 O foe-chastiser, there too the fish
continued to grow;
seeing Manu,
it said to him:

23 "O *bhagavan,* my body has grown so large
I cannot move about
in the Gaṅgā,
please take me to the sea."

24 So, son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
Manu took the fish out of the Gaṅgā,
and personally placed it
in the sea.

25 Its size was enormous,
but Manu carried it easily;
the smell and touch of the fish
delighted him.

26 When the fish was cast into the sea
by Manu,
it smiled, and said these words
to the ascetic:

27 "*Bhagavan*, you have given me
the most special care.
Let me tell you what to do
in the fullness of time.

28 O mahā-fortune-favoured one, *pralaya* is near,
the time, *bhagavan*,
of the dissolution
of all moving and unmoving life.

29 The time for the cleansing of the world
is ripe.
I will therefore tell you something
for your welfare.

30 The fearful end now awaits
all moving and unmoving life –
all that stirs
and all that is stationary.

31 Start work immediately
on a strong, huge boat.
Get a long rope. Sit in it, O mahā-muni,
with the Seven Ṛṣis.

32 Take with you all the seeds
that were listed by Brahmins
since early times;
preserve them separately.

33 O favourite of all munis, stay there,
wait for me.
You will recognise me in the shape
of a horned reptile.

34 I must leave now. Do as I say.
Without my help,
you will not be able to survive
the awesome flood.

35 *Vibho*, radiant lord,
do not doubt my words."
"I will do all that you say,"
Manu replied.

36 Pleased with each other's words,
both departed.
Mahārāja, as ordered by the fish,
Vaivasvata-Manu

37 Collected all the different varieties of seeds;
then, O foe-destroyer,
he set out on a violent sea
in that boat.

38 O subduer of hostile cities, O ruler of the earth,
he thought of the fish,
and the fish,
intuiting his thought,

39 Appeared in the ocean with horns
on its head.
O finest of the Bharatas,
seeing the fish

40 Horns emerge rock-like,
as he had been told,
Manu swung the rope
and tossed it around the horns.

41 The rope held, O hostile city-subduer!
Pulling hard,
the fish towed the boat
with stupendous force

42 Over the salt sea.
It pulled the boat
over the wild and furious waves of the sea,
O lord of men.

43 Buffeted by the howling winds
of that mahā ocean,
the boat reeled and rolled
in the frothing waters,

44 Like a drunk prostitute.
O hostile-city-conqueror,
neither land nor the horizon's points
were visible.

45 Everywhere was water;
water covered sky and heaven.
When floods swept the world
O bull-brave hero,

46 No one but Manu, the Seven Ṛṣis
and the fish could be seen.
For many years
it towed the boat

47 Through the swirling waters;
finally, O rājā,
O bull-brave Bharata,
dragging it to the Himālayas,

48 The fish smiled and,
O descendant of the Kauravas,
turning to the ṛṣis in the boat,
it said,

49 "Hurry and make the boat fast to the peak
with the rope."
O bull-brave Bharata,
they tied the boat

50 To the Himālayan peak
as soon as they heard the fish.
Since that day that peak
has been celebrated
by the name of Naubandhana,
"the Harbour",

51 And is even today called by the name,
O bull-brave Bharata.
You should know this.
The fish said to all the ṛṣis,

52 "I am Lord-of-creatures Prajāpati Brahmā,
none is greater than me.
In my fish-form
I saved you from danger.

53 Manu will create all life –
gods, anti-gods, humans,
and all that moves
and does not move –

54 By the strength of his tapasyā.
He will obtain this power;
my blessing will make him
error-free."

55 Saying this, the fish disappeared.
Vaivasvata-Manu
felt an urge to create
the earth's beings,

56 But in the process of creating,
he became confused,
so he concentrated hard
on mahā-tapasyā,

57 And once again began the work of creation,
O bull-brave Bharata,
in the right order.
This is the Fish-Myth of the Matsya-Purāṇa.

58 The man who hears this ancient story
of Manu every day
obtains happiness and all else
that he desires,
and can go to any worlds
he pleases.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-EIGHT

1 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
turned to illustrious Mārkaṇḍeya
and asked him humbly:

2 "O mahā-muni, you have witnessed
thousands of yugas.
There is no one in this world
as long-lived as you.

3 O most excellent Brahmin,
there is none equal to you in years
except perhaps
mahātmā Brahmā Parameṣṭhin.

4 You contemplate Brahmā at the time
of universal dissolution
when sky, gods, and Dānava anti-gods
destruct.

5 And when the dissolution is over
and Brahmā Pitamāha awakes,
you alone, are the witness,
seeing

6 Brahmā re-create the four kinds
of creatures
after filling the cardinal points with air
and materialising the waters.

7 O best of the twice-born, you have meditated
on the World-Guru, the World-Pitāmaha,
in his own presence,
and achieved perfect *samādhi.*

8 O Brahmin, you have personally withnessed many times
the original processes of creation.
By severe tapasyā
you excel the gods.

9 You are said to be nearest to Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa
in the next world.
The multi-formed Viṣṇu,
the Supreme Creator of the worlds –

10 Many times have you seen him in the past
with yogic insight and renunciation
that opened
your lotus-like heart.

11 By the grace of Parameṣṭhin Brahmā,
you are freed from death,
and from old age that slowly deteriorates
the body.

12 When neither sun nor fire nor wind
nor the moon,
nor earth nor air nor sky –
when nothing remains;

13 When mobile and immobile life
become a fluid mass,
when gods, anti-gods,
and the mahā-*uraga*-serpents destruct,

14 And Brahmā, the Lord of Creatures,
ensconced in his lotus,
sleeps, you alone remain in his presence
and meditate on him.

15 O best of the twice-born,
because you have personally witnessed
the march of creation
in all its variety,

16 Because, O best of the twice-born,
nothing in the three worlds is unknown to you,
I am eager to hear everything
from your lips."

17 I offer namaskāra
(Mārkaṇḍeya said)
to the Self-Born Deity
the Ancient Puruṣa
Eternal
Undecaying

18 Unmanifested
Unqualified
Inconceivably subtle!
O tiger-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira,
yellow-garbed Janārdana

19 Is the Maker and Mover
the Creator of creatures
the Atman of creatures
the Lord
Incomprehensible
Vision-delighting Mahā-inscrutable
Immaculate One

20 Without beginning
without end
Unchangeable
Undeteriorating
World-Pervader
Creator of all
Himself uncreated
Source of all power.

21 Even the gods cannot know him who knows him.
O excellent rājā, after the universal dissolution,
this magnificent creation

22 Is again re-created.
O tiger-among-men! The Kṛta-yuga, it is said,
consists of four thousand god-years,

23 Its dawn and evening *saṁdhyā*-twilights being
four hundred god-years each.
The Tretā-yuga
has three thousand god-years,

24 Its dawn and evening saṁdhyā
three hundred god-years each.
The Dvāpara-yuga
has two thousand god-years,

25 With dawn and evening saṁdhyā
of two hundred god-years each.
The Kali-yuga
has one thousand god-years,

26 Its dawn and evening *saṁdhyās*
being a hundred god-years each.
The dawn and evening saṁdhyās
in each yuga are of equal duration.

27 When the Kali-yuga is over,
the Kṛta recommences;
the yugas together comprise a cycle
of twelve thousand god-years.

28 A thousand of these cycles
makes one day of Brahmā.
When the universe
is retracted into Brahmā's abode,

29 O tiger-among-men, the disappearance of phenomena
is described by the learned
as *pralaya*-dissolution.
O bull brave Bharata, towards the end

30 Of the last yuga
of a thousand god-years,
men start lying, O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
they offer proxy gifts and yajñas,

31 As well as proxy vows.
Brahmins take on Śūdras' activities,
Śūdras start accumulating wealth,

32 And Kṣatriyas adopt Brahmin-dharma.
Brahmins abstain from yajñas and learning,
give up staff and deer-skin

33 In the Kali-yuga,
and eat everything without discrimination.
Tāta! My child! They give us whispered prayers,
and Śūdras take them up.

34 O lord of men! When the life of the world
becomes muddled in this way,
destruction is at hand.
Mleccha rājās will rule at that time.

35 These wicked kings, slaves of falsehood,
by falsehood.
The Āndhrās, Śakas, Pulindas, Yavanas,

36 Kāmbojas, Bāhlīkas, and Ābhīras
will pluck up courage,
and dominate the earth
No Brahmin will follow his dharma.

37 O lord of men! The Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas
will also act contrary to their natures
Man will be short-lived,
weak and insecure –

38 A creature of little stamina,
short of stature, speaker of half-truths,
his lands and deserts filled
with wild animals.

39 When the yuga-end comes,
futile will be the word 'Brahmā".
Śūdras will say "Bho!",
Brahmins reply "Yes, noble sir."

40 O lord of the earth! At the end of the yuga,
animals will multiply.
Perfumes will no more delight
the olfactory sense.

41 O tiger-among-men!
Taste-buds will get corrupted at yuga-end;
mother will give birth to diminutive children
without manners or goodness;
O rājā, women's mouths will be used
for sexual intercourse.

42 At yuga-end,
markets will be everywhere,
streets overflow with sellers of virtue.
O rājā!
Women will discard modesty
and let their hair fall free.

43 Cows will give less milk,
hordes of crows will crowd the trees,
which will be fruitless
and flowerless.

44 Brahmins guilty of killing Brahmins,
O ruler of the earth,
will accept honours from kings
guilty of falsehoods.

45 Duped by greed and ignorance,
putting on a pose of dharma,
Brahmins will go begging
for so-called alms.

46 And householders with incomes
will deceitfully evade taxes,
and Brahmins disguised as ascetics
will trade

47 And make money, growing beard and moustache
with ulterior motives.
O tiger-among-men! Many greedy Brahmins
will become brahmacārīs for money.

48 They will drink hard
and seduce their gurus' wives;
spurred by passion,
they will lust for flesh-pleasures.

49 At the end of the yuga,
the āshrams of ascetics
will be filled with hypocritical scoundrels
seeking only enjoyment.

50 Bhagavān Indra, the chastiser of Pāka,
will not send timely rain,
and the seeds sown will not sprout,
O Bharata descendant.

51 O defectless one! Mean in thought and deed,
men will find joy in malice and envy.
The earth will teem
with adharma's bitter fruits.

52 The man of dharma in such times
will not live long.
No kind of dharma will survive
for too long then.

53 O tiger-among-men,
cunning traders will then
short-change their customers
with false weights and measures.

54 Men of dharma will not prosper,
but the wicked will.
Dharma will lose strength,
adharma become powerful.

55 Poverty and early death
will stalk men of dharma;
the yuga's end will see
long-lived, wealthy men of adharma.

56 The yuga's dissolution will see vice
flourish in public places;
men will prefer adharma
for achieving goals.

57 Their heads will turn
even with petty wealth;
they will defalcate money
left with them

58 In secret trust.
Because habitually wicked, O rājā,
they will say,
"No, nothing was left with us."

59 Beasts of prey and other animals
will be seen
wandering in cities and towns
as well as temples.

60 O king! Girls of seven and eight
will become pregnant,
and boys of ten or twelve
will beget sons.

61 By the age of sixteen,
many men will be reduced to decrepitude,
Brief indeed
will be a man's life.

62 Maharājā, when lives are shortened,
the young will act like the old,
and the old
will behave childishly.

63 Women will become low-charactered;
they will deceive their husbands,
and copulate with servants,
slaves, and animals.

64 O king! Even the wives of respectable men
will seek out others –
even during the lifespans
of their husbands.

65 At the end of the thousands of years
of the yuga,
a tremendous drought will descend,
lasting several years.

66 O lord of the earth, human beings
and other creatures,
sapped of their vitality,
will perish in thousands.

67 Seven incandescent suns will burst
in the sky
and suck up all the waters
of the rivers and oceans.

68 O bull-brave Bharata,
all things of wood and grass,
dry or wet, will be consumed
and reduced to ashes.

69 O descendant of Bharata! Fanned by winds,
The conflagration called Samvartaka
will sweep the earth, already ravaged
by the seven suns.

70 It will penetrate earth
and reach the lower regions,
bringing devastation to gods,
Dānava anti-gods and yakṣas.

71 O ruler of the earth, it will incinerate
the lower regions and the earth,
and destroy all life
in a flash.

72 The Saṁvartaka conflagration,
fanned by winds,
will consume this earth that extends
over thousands of *yojanas.*

73 Radiantly effulgent lord-of-all Fire
will consume
the universe's gods, anti-gods, gandharvas,
yakṣas, *uraga*-serpents, rākṣasas.

74 And mahā-masses of clouds
like herds of elephants
will shoot skywards,
adorned with lovely lightning-garlands.

75 Some will have the colour
of blue lotuses,
some lilies, some lotus-stems,
and others bright red.

76 Some will be like yellow turmeric,
some the colour of crow's eggs,
some lotus leaves,
some vermillion.

77 Some will be shaped like giant cities,
some like elephants,
some lizards, others sharks
and *makara*-monsters.

78 Mahārāja! The lightning-garlanded clouds
that will crowd the skies
will roar terrifyingly – these rainclouds
will obscure the skies,

79 And pour down torrents of water,
O mahārāja,
on the mountains, mines and forests
of the earth.

80 Finally, O bull-brave mortal,
on orders from Brahmā,
they will discharge cascades of rain,
sweeping and flooding the earth.

81 The massive downpour will fall
in such copious sheets
that the inauspicious conflagration
will be extinguished.

82 Commanded by mahātmā Brahmā,
the clouds will send
torrents of rain for twelve years
and drown the earth.

83 O descendant of Bharata,
the oceans will overflow,
the mountains crack and fall,
and earth almost sink.

84 Then a sudden blowing of winds:
and the clouds
will be driven across the sky
till they disappear.

85 O descendant of Bharata,
the Self-Born Divinity, Svayambhu Brahmā,
the lotus-ensconced deity
will swallow the winds, and sleep.

86 The earth a vast sheet of water;
all moving and unmoving life
destroyed;
no more gods and anti-gods.
no more yakṣas,
and no more rākṣasas.

87 O ruler of earth, no human being –
no trees, no animals –
the sky itself no more –
only I, a sad witness,

88 O finest of rulers,
wandering over that great ocean,
my heart filled with grief
because my eyes see no life.

89 And so I keep on moving
for a long time, O lord of men,
until I am tired;
but I find no place to rest.

90 And then, O ruler of earth,
in that endless expanse of water,
I chance upon
a huge banyan.

91 O lord of men,
I see sitting on a celestial bed
nestled in one of the thick-leaved
banyan branches

92 A boy with the breathtaking beauty
of lotus or moon;
his eyes large
like lotus petals, O Bharata-descendant.

93 I am amazed, O protector of the earth,
and I wonder:
Strange, this child alive
when the world is destroyed!

94 O lord of men! I have knowledge
of Past, Present and Future,
I try using tapasyā,
but fail to learn about him.

95 He shines like the flax-blossom,
he is graced
with the Śrīvatsa-sign,
he is like Lakṣmī's abode!

96 The lotus-eyed, radiant boy
with the Śrīvatsa-mark
says to me
these sweet, pleasing words:

97 "Descendant of Bhṛgu, Mārkaṇḍeya,
I know you are tired.
You can rest here
for as long as you wish.

98 O finest of munis, enter my body
and rest there.
I am pleased with you;
this place is for you."

99 O descendant of Bharata,
addressed by the boy,
I become unaware of my never-ending long life
and my body.

100 Suddenly he opens his mouth and,
as if by the yoga of fate,
I am propelled without volition
inside it.

101 O ruler of men, I enter his stomach
and I see there
the world with all its kingdoms
and cities.

102 Gaṅgā, Śatadru, Sītā, Yamunā, Kauśikī,
Carmaṇvatī, Vetravatī, Candrabhāgā, Sarasvatī,

103 Sindhu, Vipāśā, Godāvarī – all these rivers;
Vasvokasārā, Nalinī, Narmadā as well;

104 Tāmrā, Veṇā, sacred-flowing Puṇyatoyā,
Suveṇā, Kṛṣnaveṇā, the great river Irāmā,

105 Vitastā, and the mahā-river Kāveri, O mahārāja;
Śoṇa, Viśalyā and Kimpunā, O tiger-among-men; –

106 These and other rivers of the world
I see flowing in the mahātmā-boy's stomach.

107 O foe-chastiser, I see there
the shark-and-crocodile-filled ocean,
gem-laden reservoir
of waters.

108 There I see
the sun-and-moon-adorned sky,
brilliantly lustrous,
resplendently aflame.

109 O rājā! I see
the lovely forest-filled earth,
hundreds of islands and rivers,
and Brahmins
performing their rituals
and yajñas.

110 O lord of men! I see Kṣatriyas
working for the good of the other castes,
and Vaiśyas engaged
in agriculture,

111 Śūdras dedicated to serving
the twice-born.
Wandering in the stomach
of that mahātmā boy, O rājā,

112 I see the mountains Himavat and Hemakūṭa,
and Niṣadha and silver-rich Śveta;

113 I also see the Gandhamādana, O ruler of men,
and Mandara and the mahā-mountain Nīla;

114 Mahārāja, I see the golden mountain Meru,
and Mandara, and excellent Vindhya;

115 I see the mountains of Malaya and Pariyātra; –
these and many other mountains

116 I see inside his stomach,
all gem-laden.
O lord of men! I also see lions and tigers
and bears.

117 All the other animals of earth
I also see, O lord of the earth,
as I wander without hindrance
in his stomach.

118 Entering his stomach and roaming there,
I see, O tiger-among-men,
the entire assembly of gods,
Indra and others,

119 The Sādhyas, Rudras, Ādityas, Guhyakas, *pitṛs,*
the nāga-snakes, Suparṇa, Vasus, Aśvins,

120 Gandharvas, apsarās, yakṣas, and ṛṣis,
Daityas and Dānavas, and the Nāgas;

121 The sons of Siṁhika, and other foes of the gods,
Whatever mobile and immobile creatures of earth

122 I had seen, I see again in the mahātmā's stomach.
O rājā! Subsisting on fruits, I wander in the belly-world

123 Of the mahātmā boy for hundreds of years,
but I cannot discover its limits,

124 I move anxiously through his entire body,
O lord of the world,
but I cannot discover
its limits, O rājā.

125 In thought and deed
I seek the protection
of the boon-granting Deity
and acknowledge His power.

126 O Puruṣottama-Yudhiṣṭhira,
O finest-among-men rājā,
then suddenly
I am expelled forcibly
from the mouth of the mahātmā
by a gust of wind.

127 O tiger-among-men, O lord-of-the-world,
perched on the banyan-branch –
that Śrivatsa-marked,
universe-swallowing boy,

128 I see that illimitably radiant one,
in the guise of a child,
O tiger-among-men,
with the Śrīvatsa-sign.

129 The mahā-radiant, Śrīvatsa-marked,
ochre-robed boy, gratified,
smiles, O tiger-among-men,
and says to me:

130 “Super-excellent muni Mārkaṇḍeya,
so you have lived and rested
inside my body.
Tell me.”

131 As he says this
I seem to gain new vision;
I seem to really know;
I am free of delusion.

132 *Tāta!* Child, I see the inexhaustible powers
of that radiant body
and I touch
his holy, well-shaped feet,

133 Whose soles are copper-bright
and toes light pink.
I place them adoringly on my head;
the infinitely radiant boy

134 I approach with the utmost humility;
I offer him *añjali,*
I see the Deity, the All-Ātman,
the lotus-eyed one.

135 I do *añjali* again before him, I namaskāra him,
and I say,
“God, I wish to know you,
and your supreme māyā.

136 *Bhagavan*! Revered one!
I entered your body through your mouth
and I saw the entire universe
in your stomach:

137 Gods, anti-gods, rākṣasas, yakṣas, gandharvas,
Nāgas – all moving and unmoving life.

138 I ran through all parts
of your body,
but through your grace
my memory is intact.

139 O mahā lord,
because you wished it, not I,
I have emerged.
Lotus-eyed one, I must know you.

140 Why are you here as a boy,
why do you swallow the worlds?
Explain all this
to me.

141 O perfect one, foe-chastiser,
is the universe
really inside you?
How long will you stay here?

142 O Lord of all the gods,
I want to know all this in detail.
Lotus-eyed one,
a Brahmin has the right to ask.

143 Lord! What I have seen today
is utterly incredible."
The auspicious God of gods
hears me say this,
and, soothing me,
the eloquent speaker speaks:

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-NINE

1 The Divinity said:
"Brahmin,
even the gods do not know me.
But I am pleased with you.
I will tell you
how I created the universe.

2 You have filial devotion, you are a *pitṛ*-bhakta;
you have sought my protection.
You have seen me,
your brahmacarya is strong.

3 Long ago,
I called the waters Nārā;
because they are my *āyaṇa* or abode,
I am Nārāyaṇa.

[III:189:4-11]

Transcreated by P. Lal

4 O finest of the twice-born!
I am Nārāyaṇa
Eternal
Unchangeable
Source of all life
Its Creator
Its Destroyer.

5 I am Viṣṇu
I am Brahmā
I am Śakra-Indra, lord of the gods.
I am rājā Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera.
I am Yama, lord of the spirits of the dead.

6 O finest of the twice-born!
I am Śiva
I am Soma
I am Kaśyapa
And Prajāpati
I am Dhātā-Vidhātā
I am Yajña personified.

7 Fire my mouth
Earth my feet
Sun and moon my eyes
Heaven my head
Sky and the directions my ears
Waters my sweat

8 Space and the cardinal points my body
Air my mind.
I have performed hundreds
Of *dakṣiṇā*-abundant sacrifices.

9 I am present in the yajñas of the gods.
Those who know the Vedas offer yajñas to me.
The Kṣatriyas of earth who long for heaven,

10 And the Vaiśyas who seek the heaven-world,
Both worship me.
The sea-girdled, Meru-and-Mandara-decorated earth

11 I support on my head as Śeṣa-nāga.
In the distant past
In the form of a boar

12 I raised the submerged universe.
As the Vaḍavā-mouth of Agni,
O finest of the twice-born,

13 I suck dry the waters
And create them again.
My mouth the Brahmins
My arms the Kṣatriyas
My thighs the Vaiśyas

14 My feet the Śūdras –
One by one issuing
From my infinite energy.
The Ṛg-Veda and Sāma-Veda
The Yajur-Veda and Atharva-Veda.

15 Issue from me and dissolve into me.
The serene, self-controlled, knowledge-seeking,

16 Lust-anger-and-envy-free, faultless,
pure-minded, ego-shirking, atman-knowing

17 Brahmins worship me with total concentration.
I am the Saṁvartaka-Vahni-Fire
The Saṁvartaka-Wind

18 The Saṁvartaka-Sun
I am the Saṁvartaka Anila-Fire.
What are seen in the sky as stars

19 Are the pores of my skin, O excellent Brahmin.
The gem-filled oceans and the four directions

20 Are my robes, my bed, my abode –
I have spread them to fulfil
The desires of the gods.

21 O excellent one!
Kāma and anger and pleasure
Fear and delusion
Are all forms of my glory.

22 O Brahmin! Whatever men achieve
By truth and charity
Severe tapasyā and ahiṁsā
And serene behaviour

23 Is obtained through my grace.
Guided by me, they roam in my body,
Their minds filled by me.
They do not move, unless moved by me.

24 The twice-born who study the Vedas,
Seek peace of mind, and perform yajñas
After controlling their passions,
Find the highest goal.

25 This goal is not achieved
By the wicked and greedy,
The mean and infamous,
Whose ātmans are impure.

26 This mahā-fruit is achieved
Only by those yogīs whose ātmans are pure
Not by the foolish and selfish.

27 Whenever dharma declines
And adharma flourishes,
I body myself forth, O excellent one.

28 When horrific and vicious
Anti-gods and rākṣasas
Whom even gods cannot kill
Are born on earth,

29 I take my birth
Among men of good karma,
And with my human form
I bring peace on earth.

30 With my māyā I create
All moving and unmoving life,
Men, gods, gandharvas, rākṣasas, *uraga*-scrpents,
And also destroy them.

31 To restore goodness,
I am born as human.
At other times I appear
In forms inconceivable.

32 White in Kṛta-yuga,
Yellow in Tretā-yuga,
Red in Dvāpara,
Black in Kali.

33 Dharma is one-fourths in Kali-yuga.
At the end of Kali-yuga,
I become awesomely fearful Kāla,

34 All consuming Cosmic Time, and I dissolve
The three worlds and all their
Moving and unmoving life.
My three steps straddle the worlds:
I am the Ātman of the universe,
I am the Bliss of the worlds.

35 I humble the proud
I am the Infinite Ananta
Hṛṣikeśa the Lord of the senses
My power is measureless
I am the Formless One, O Brahmin.
I spin the wheel of Kāla.

36 I destroy creatures
I am the efforts of creatures
O Indra-among-Brahmins!
My Ātman pervades all creatures
But none knows me.

37 Bhakta-devotees offer pūjā to me
In all the worlds.
Whatever discomfort you felt
In my stomach, O Brahmin,

38 Was all for your good.
You have seen all the worlds
And their teeming mobile and immobile life.

39 My Ātman, the Source of Life,
Ordains everything.
The Pitāmaha of the worlds
Is half of my body.

40 I am Nārāyaṇa
Wielder of the conch
The *cakra* and the mace.
For a period that lasts
A thousand times that of the four yugas

41 I, the Ātman of the universe,
Sleep,
And creatures dissolve in me.
Then I manifest myself

42 As a boy (though I am not a boy)
And remain here till Brahmā wakes.
I in Brahmā-form
Will give you boons.

43 I am pleased with you,
O adored rsi of the Brahmin ṛṣis.
Seeing these desolate waters
And all moving and unmoving life destroyed,

44 You grieved.
Knowing this, I revealed to you
The universe when you entered my body.

45 You were bewildered
By the vision of the entire universe.
Therefore, O Brahmin,
I expelled you quickly.

46 I have spoken to you about the Ātman
Which even gods and anti-gods cannot conceive.
So long as Bhagavān Brahmā of mahā tapasyā
Does not awake,

47 Till then, O Brahmin ṛṣi,
Have faith and live here in peace.

48 O finest of the twice-born!
When Brahmā, Pitāmahā of all the worlds, awakes,
I singly will create all bodied creatures,

49 And *ākāśa*-sky, earth, light, wind, water,
And earth's teeming mobile and immobile life."

50 Saying this (continued Mārkaṇḍeya),
the super-wondrous Deity vanishes
and I see magical creation
recommence.

51 O best of the Bharatas, I see all this
with my own eyes
at the end of the yuga,
O finest of all-dharma-knowing rājās.

52 O tiger-among-men! The lotus-eyed Deity
whom I saw in that distant past,
is now your own relative –
Janārdana-Krishna.

53 Kuntī's son, the boons he granted me
preserved my memory,
ensured my unending long life,
made my death self-willed.

54 That Deity is mahā-muscled Krishna,
descendant of Vṛṣṇi,
the Most Radiant Ancient Lord,
inconceivable Hari who plays with the world.

55 He is Dhātā
He is Vidhātā
He the Eternal
Destroyer of all
He is Govinda
He is the Lord of all Prajāpatis
He is the Lord
He the bearer
Of the Śrīvatsa-mark.

56 Seeing the Vṛṣṇi chief, the Primal Deity,
Jiṣṇu-Viṣṇu,
victorious, yellow-robed,
my memory returned.

57 The descendant of Madhu, Mādhava-Krishna,
is mother and father of creatures.
Take refuge in this great protector,
O bull-brave Kauravas!

58 Vaiśampāyana said: Mārkaṇḍeya finished;
and the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
the bull-brave twins and Draupadī,
namaskāra-ed Janārdana-Krishna

59 O tiger-among-men!
Respectworthy Krishna accepted their homage,
and consoled them
with sweet and inspiring words.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY

1 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira (continued Vaiśampāyana)
asked the mahā-muni Mārkaṇḍeya
about the world's future
under his sovereignty.

2 "Most eloquent one, the account you gave
of the destruction and re-creation
of the universe at yuga-end
is fascinating, O Bhārgava muni.

3 I am eager to know
what will happen in the Kali-yuga.
When Dharma is in shambles,
what remains?

4 What power will men have,
what will they eat,
how amuse themselves –
their longevity, their dress –

5 And after how long a spell of time
will the Kṛta-yuga re-start?
O muni, tell me this.
Your narration is gripping."

6 The maha-ṛṣi (Vaiśampāyana said)
began his account,
to the delight of tiger-of-the-Vṛṣṇis Krishna
and the Pāṇḍavas.

7 O Indra-among-rājās!
I will tell you all (Mārkaṇḍeya said)
that I have heard and intuitively learnt
through the grace the God of gods.

8 Best of the Bharatas,
listen as I tell you
about the state of the world
in that wicked age.

9 O bull-brave Bharata,
in the Kṛta-yuga
guile, hypocrisy, and greed were absent,
Dharma firm as a four-legged bull,

10 In the Tretā-yuga,
adharma took away one leg, leaving three,
In the Dvāpara,
Dharma they say equals adharma.

11 In the Kali-yuga, great Bharata,
Dharma mixed with three-fourths adharma
will prevail
So it was said

12 That only a fourth of Dharma will remain.
Son of Pāṇḍu,
longevity, intelligence,
energy and physical strength

13 Decrease in each successive yuga.
Yudhiṣṭhira!
The Brahmins, the Kṣatriyas, the Vaiśyas,
and the Śūdras.

14 Will follow Dharma hypocritically,
and trap fellowmen
in nets of false dharma.
Self-appointed paṇḍits will distort truth.

15 When truth deteriorates,
longevity is reduced;
longevity being reduced,
men acquire less and less of knowledge.

16 Little knowledge brings even less wisdom.
Greed and ego take over.
Men who are avaricious,
ignorant, lustful,

17 Will suspect each other,
and even want
to kill each other.
Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas

18 Become equal with Śūdras.
The low ascend to the middle,
and the middle descends
to the lowest.

19 Such will be the state of things
at the end of the yuga.
Flax robes will be preferred,
cheap *koradūṣaka* grain sought after.

20 At the yuga's dissolution,
husbands will treat wives like enemies;
they will live on fish,
and goat and sheep milk,

21 Because cows will be extinct.
Even the most strict-vowed
will develop greedy tendencies
during this period.

22 At the yuga's dissolution people
will be murderously hostile to each other.
They will not chant *japa*,
they will be thieves and negative-thinkers.

23 They will dig up the banks of rivulets
and plant seeds there;
yet nothing will grow there either,
at the end of the yuga.

24 Those who value the rituals of *śrāddha*
will become greedy
and snatch and enjoy
others' possessions.

25 Father will enjoy son's possessions,
and son, father's.
Enjoyments forbidden by the śāstras
will be desired.

26 Brahmins will insult the Vedas,
and give up vows.
They will argue over trifles,
and abandon yajñas and *homas*.
Hair-splitting will demean
their minds.

27 Men will till lowlands,
and use one-year old cows and calves
to draw the plough
and carry loads.

28 Sons will kill fathers, and fathers sons,
and none will blame them;
they will take pride
in these acts.

29 The world will be filled
with *mleccha* behaviour and *mleccha* ideas.
Yajñas will cease;
true joy disappear.

30 Men will loot the helpless,
and take advantage of the weak,
such as widows
and those who are friendless.

31 Having little energy, and no knowledge,
slaves of greed, ignorance,
and the wickedest practices,
men will accept

32 Gifts made by motivated people,
and then mock them.
O Kuntī's son, wicked-minded rājās,
ignorant yet proud,

33 Will war with each other
with murderous intentions.
Kṣatriyas will become at yuga-end
the world's thorns.

34 O Bharata descendant!
Greed, vanity and pride will overcome them
and instead of caring for their subjects,
they will oppress them.

35 O descendant of Bharata!
They will exploit the gentle and honest,
ignoring their griefs,
and steal their wealth and violate their wives.

36 During this yuga-end,
none will ask for a girl,
none will bestow a girl,
Girls will choose their own husbands.

37 Obscured by folly,
unhappy with what they possess,
rājās will fleece their subjects
by all means in their power.

38 The world will be barbarised.
At this yuga-end,
right hand will cheat the left,
left the right.

39 Self-appointed paṇḍits will defile truth.
The old will have the folly of youth,
and the young
will be senile.

40 Cowards will seem to be brave,
and the brave
will be as sad as cowards.
Mistrust will become common.

41 Filled with folly and greed,
people will make no distinctions
about food habits. Adharma will flourish,
and Dharma decline.

42 Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, and Vaiśyas
will disappear; caste-distinctions will vanish;
only one caste will remain
at the end of the yuga.

43 Fathers will not forgive sons,
nor sons fathers;
and wives no longer listen
to their husbands.

44 At the time of yuga-end,
men will seek out countries
where barley and wheat
are staple foods.

45 O lord of the earth!
Men and women will be absolutely free –
so free that they will not even tolerate
each other's behaviour.

46 Yudhiṣṭhira! The world will be savaged.
Men will refuse
to gratify the gods
by offerings of *śrāddha.*

47 O lord of men!
No one will listen to anyone,
no one will be anyone's guru.
Terrible anarchy will result.

48 People will live an average
of sixteen years.
As soon as they reach that figure,
they will die.

49 Girls of five and six
will give birth to babies,
and boys of seven and eight
will become fathers.

50 O tiger-among-rājās!
At the time of yuga-end,
wives will be unhappy with husbands,
and husbands unhappy with their wives.

51 At the time of the yuga's dissolution,
wealth will decrease,
men pretend to be good,
violence will flourish and charity cease to exist.

52 At yuga-end, markets will be everywhere,
streets overflow with sellers of virtue.
O rājā! Women will discard modesty
and let their hair fall free.

53 At that time, men will turn into *mlecchas*;
they will eat anything:
they will follow
no restrictions.

54 O best of the Bharatas,
at the time of yuga-end,
cheating in buying and selling
will be commonplace.

55 At yuga-end,
men will perform rituals and ceremonies
without knowing their significance,
interpreting as they like.

56 At the time of yuga-dissolution,
headstrong men
will be ruthless with each other –
and vindictive.

57 People will heartlessly cut down trees
and demolish gardens.
Men will not know where to earn
their livelihood.

58 Lured by greed, O king,
men will murder Brahmins
to seize and enjoy
their wealth.

59 Śūdra-persecuted Brahmins, filled with fear,
will exclaim “Hai! Hai!”
and find none in the world
to defend them.

60 O respectworthy Kaurava descendant!
When men become wicked and cruel,
and slaughter animals and murder fellow-beings,
yuga-end has come.

61 Hounded by oppressors,
excellent Brahmins will run for safety
to rivers, hills,
and wild regions.

62 O rājā! The excellent twice-born
will scatter like alarmed crows
in helter-skelter confusion.
Burdened by dacoits and royal taxes,

63 They will lose all peace of mind
at yuga-end;
they will do foul deeds,
and become slaves of Śūdras.

64 The Śūdras will expound Dharma;
Brahmins will listen
and guide their lives on the basis
of such interpretations.

65 The low will become high,
and all things appear to be reversed.
Bones, not gods,
will be offered pūjā.

66 At the finish of the yuga,
Śūdras will stop serving Brahmins,
In āshrams of Brahma-ṛṣis,
in places of education,

67 In spots sacred to the gods,
in sacred tanks and in nāga-areas,
in sacrificial grounds,
honouring the gods in god-homes
will be abandoned in favour of walls
studded with bone relics.

68 These are the signs of Yugānta!
When men become monstrous,
dharma-less, carnivorous,
and liquor-addicted,

69 That is the time of yuga-end.
When flowers
grow from flowers, and fruits
out of fruits,

70 That is the time of yuga-end.
O mahārāja,
then the clouds will send down
unseasonal rain.

71 The sacred rituals will not be observed
in the proper order.
Śūdras will pick quarrels
with Brahmins.

72 The earth will be swarming with *mlecchas*,
and Brahmins, afraid of crushing taxes,
will escape
where they can.

73 Distinctions between human beings
will disappear.
The unemployed will live on roots and fruits
in forest āshrams.

74 When such sorrows strike the world,
dignity and sanity will vanish.
Disciples, instead of following instructions,
will harm their gurus.

75 The impoverished ācārya
will be contemptuously treated.
Kinsfolk and friends will be affectionate
from money-motives.

76 Universal shortages will herald
the end of the yuga.
The chief directions will be aflame,
the stars dimmed,

77 The planets and constellation-clusters
become inauspicious.
Winds will blow awry, meteors blaze across,
foreboding mahā-calamity.

78 The sun will shine with six other suns.
Chaos and confusion on all sides –
fierce conflagrations
on all sides.

79 From sunrise to sunset,
the sun will be obscured by Rāhu.
Thousand-eyed Bhagavān Indra
will send torrential rain.

80 At yuga-end,
crops will not bear full harvest.
Women will speak harshly,
and sob pitilessly, hysterically.

81 They will refuse to obey
their husbands.
At yuga-dissolution,
sons will kill fathers and mothers.

82 Women with full liberty
will kill husbands and sons.
Mahārāja, Rāhu will eclipse the sun
out of season.

83 At yuga-end, fires will break out
indiscriminately everywhere.
Travellers, without food, water, or shelter,
even when they ask

84 For help, will be stranded on the roads.
Crows, snakes, kites,
vultures and other birds and beasts
will scream fearfully,

85 When the time of yuga-dissolution approaches.
At that terrible time,
men will abandon
friends and relatives,

86 Servants and followers. At yuga-end,
abandoning towns and cities
and their own countries,
men will feverishly

87 Go to new lands
and wish to settle there.
"Oh my child! Oh my son!" –
with these piteous cries,

88 They will wander in the strange lands
of this earth.
And when the terrible end of the yuga
is complete,

89 New life will be re-born,
beginning with the twice-born.
At the end of the yuga,
so that men may prosper,

90 Destiny will be kind to man,
by its own laws.
When the sun, and the moon,
and Bṛhaspati

91 Enter the constellation of Puṣya,
the clouds will shower beneficial rains,
and planets
become auspicious.

92 The planets, revolving in steady orbits,
will become auspicious for man;
prosperity, wealth and peace
will follow.

93 Impelled by Kāla,
a Brahmin named Viṣṇuyaśa Kalki
will take birth, of mahā energy,
radiance and mahā-intelligence,

94 A mahātma, endowed with every virtue,
saviour of man,
in a village called Sambhala,
in a Brahmin family.

95 O rājā! By thought-power he will be able
to summon chariots,
weapons, soldiers, and armour
whenever he wishes;
he will be the sovereign emperor,
victorious in dharma.

96 He will arrive for the destruction
of the yuga:
he will restore harmony to the over-populated,
disintegrating world.

97 He will destroy, and build a new yuga.
This twice-born emperor,
surrounded by hosts
of Brahmins,
will annihilate the mean *mlecchas*
wherever they are.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-ONE

1 Exterminating the thieves and looters
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya)
Kalki will gift this world to Brahmins
after performing Mahā-Yajña.

2 Restoring the moral order
of the Self-Born,
the virtuous and lustrous hero
will go to a lovely forest.

3 Human beings will follow the example
of his conduct.
With thieves and looters wiped out,
the earth will prosper.

4 After all the world's nations have come
under his control,
Kalki, discarding black deerskin, śakti-lances,
trident, and other weapons,

5 Will wander over the earth,
destroying thieves and looters still remaining,
honoured by Brahmins
and honouring them.

6 Wails of "Hai dear father!" "Hai mother!" "Hai son!"
will fill the skies
when he liquidates
the thieves and looters.

7 O Bharata descendant!
When the Kṛta-yuga re-commences,
adharma will be replaced by dharma,
and men will re-start religious rituals.

8 Gardens, yajña-grounds, large tanks,
educational establishments,
ponds and god-houses will re-appear,
as will sacred rites

9 Of yajñas, in the Kṛta-yuga.
Brahmins will all
be honest and well-meaning munis
who practise tapasyā.

10 Āshrams appropriated by scoundrels
will return to the hands
of truth-loving men.
Seeds sown will begin to sprout richly.

11 Multiple crops will grow in all seasons.
Human beings
will devote themselves
to charity, vow-discipline, and order.

12 Yajña-and-meditation-devoted Brahmins
will be motivated
towards dharma and happiness.
Rājās will govern with dharma.

13 In the Kṛta-yuga, Vaiśyas will trade,
Brahmins pursue their six duties,
and Kṣatriyas perform
deeds of valour.

14 Śūdras will dedicate themselves
to the service of the other three castes.
This will be the dharma
of the Kṛta, Tretā, and Dvāpara yugas.

15 Pāṇḍu's son, I have given you
a comprehensive account
of the time-spans of different yugas
as is commonly known.

16 I have told you everything
about past and future
as narrated by Vāyu
in his own ṛṣi-adored Purāṇa.

17 Because I am limitlessly long-lived,
I have seen many world-cycles.
I have told you all
that I have seen and felt.

18 Undeteriorating one, listen, with your brothers,
to what I now say
to clear your doubts
about Dharma.

19 O best among men of dharma,
always strive for Dharma.
O rājā! The man of dharma obtains happiness
here and hereafter.

20 Defectless one, listen to my beneficial message –
never insult a Brahmin –
an angered Brahmin can destroy
the three worlds.

21 The excellent Kurus (Vaiśampāyana said)
heard this,
and the intelligent and illustrious
Yudhiṣṭhira asked:

22 "O muni, what should be my dharma
if I wish to protect my subjects?
How should my behaviour
never transgress sva-dharma?"

23 Mārkaṇḍeya replied:
"Be kind to all life.
Work for the good of all.
Love, don't hate.

24 Be truthful, be gentle,
care for your subjects.
Follow dharma, discard adharma,
offer pūjā to gods and *pitṛs.*

25 Whatever wrong you did from ignorance,
expiate by charity.
Give up pride,
take up humility.

26 Rule the whole world, thus,
and be happy.
Such is, was, and will be
Dharma.

27 Child, *tāta*, do not let your present condition
depress you.
There is nothing in past or future
that you do not know.

28 *Tāta,* child, the wise are never confounded
by the caprices of Kāla.
O mahā-muscled hero,
Kāla governs even the fate of the gods.

29 Kāla afflicts all, *tāta,* my child.
Defectless one,
have no doubts
regarding what I say.

30 If you doubt my words,
your dharma will suffer.
O bull-brave Bharata,
you belong to the famed Kuru dynasty.

31 You should practise
all that I have said
in thought and word,
and in speech."
"Excellent Brahmin," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"the advice you have given me
is sweet to the ear
and pleasing to the mind.

32 *Vibho!* Radiant one! I will follow it carefully,
every command.
O Indra-among-Brahmins!
I will shun greed and fear and pride.

33 *Prabhu!* Lord, I will act exactly
as you have advised."
Having listened to the words
of supremely wise Mārkaṇḍeya,

34 The Pāṇḍavas were inspired, O rājā.
So was Śārṅga-bow-wielding Krishna
and the assembly
of bull-brave Brahmins.

35 They were spellbound
by the auspicious narration
of ancient *purāṇa* history
by deeply learned Mārkaṇḍeya.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-TWO

1 “Tell me,” said Janamejaya, “about the glory of Brahmins, as described by Mārkaṇḍeya to the Pāṇḍavas.”

2 Pāṇḍu’s son Yudhiṣṭhira said to Mārkaṇḍeya (continued Vaiśampāyana): “Tell me about the glory of Brahmins.” Mārkaṇḍeya replied: “Listen to the stories of Brahmins in the distant past.”

3 A king of Ayodhyā named Parikṣit – one of the Ikṣvāku dynasty – once happened to go out hunting.

4 He chased a deer on his horse over a long distance.

5 Worn out with hunger and thirst, he came to a dense, dark forest.

6 Entering the forest, he saw a lovely lake. He and his horse bathed in its waters.

7 Refreshed, he emerged, gave the horse some lotus stalks to champ, and himself relaxed by the lake’s edge. He heard a sweet refrain floating in the air.

8 He thought: *I don’t see any sign of human life here. Who can be singing like this?*

9 He saw a girl of supreme beauty and grace gathering flowers and singing. She came near him.

10 The rājā to her: “Fortunate lady, who are you, and whose?” She replied: “I am not married.” The king said: “I want you to be mine.”

11 She replied: “Only on one condition – that you promise me something.” When he asked what she wanted him to promise, she replied: “I must never see water.”

12 “It will be so,” said the rājā and married her. Rājā Parikṣit enjoyed her for a time; then lapsed into silence beside her.

13 He was sitting in that state when some of his soldiers arrived.

14 They saw the rājā and surrounded him. He was pleased to see them come; he rode in a palanquin back to the capital. He lived with his wife in complete privacy.

15 Even those closest to him were not allowed to see him. His chief minister asked the palace women who waited on him: "What is the matter?" The women replied:

16 "The rājā has married an exquisitely beautiful girl and made her a promise that he will never let her see water."

17 The minister heard this, and ordered the construction of an artificial forest with many flowering and fruited trees. He had a large, deep tank dug in one corner. He covered it with a net of pearls; its water looked nectar-sweet and cool. One day he said to the king in private:

18 "I know of a lovely waterless forest for you to sport in."

19 Pleased with the words of the chief minister, the king took his bewitching wife to the forest. One day, tired after his enjoyments in the forest, he felt hungry and thirsty. He saw a bower of *atimukta*-creepers.

20 He entered the bower happily, accompanied by his wife, and saw a tank filled with transparent, cool, nectar-sweet water.

21 He and his wife sat down on the tank's edge.

22 He said to her happily: "Let us bathe in this water." She plunged in the water, and disappeared.

23 He searched for her but could not find her. He ordered the tank drained. This was done; and he saw a frog squatting near a hole. He was furious.

24 "Kill all frogs everywhere!" he ordered. "Anyone wishing audience with me, let him bring a dead frog!"

25 A massacre of frogs started. The frogs went to their rājā and narrated what had happened.

26 The frog rājā, disguised as a man of tapasyā, approached Parikṣit and said:

27 "O rājā, do not let anger sway you. Be merciful to the innocent frogs." Two ślokas follow – these:

28 Do not kill the frogs!
    Be merciful, O perfect king!
The ignorant are doomed
    To endless suffering!

29 Give up this anger;
adharma befogs.
What good can there be
in killing frogs?

30 But the rājā's heart was filled with grief over the disappearance of his loved one, and he replied:

31 "Never! I will never forgive the frogs. I will exterminate every single one of them. One of the scoundrels swallowed my wife. So I will destroy them – they deserve it. Learned one, don't speak for them."

32 The frog-king, hurt and bewildered, said: "O rājā! Be kind. I am Āyu, rājā of the frogs. That girl was my daughter Suśobhanā. It was wrong of her to leave you. But she has deceived many other rājās too."

33 The rājā said: "I want her. I order you to return her to me."

34 So the frog-father bestowed his daughter on the king, telling her, "Serve this rājā."

35 Immediately after saying that, he cursed her angrily. "Because you have deceived many rājās, you will suffer for your lying – your sons will be Brahmin-haters."

36 The rājā recalled his skilful love-making. He felt that he had become the sovereign of the three worlds. Ecstatic, he offered pūjā-respects to the frog-rājā and said, tears of joy choking his voice: "I am honoured."

37 The frog-king bid farewell to his daughter, and left.

38 The rājā had three sons by her – Śala, Dala, and Bala, Installing the eldest on the throne, he went to the forest to lead a life of ātman-disciplined tapasyā.

39 One day Śala, out hunting in his chariot, spotted a deer and gave it chase.

40 He ordered the charioteer: "Faster!" The charioteer replied:

41 "O rājā, do not even try. This deer cannot be outpaced. If, however, *vāmi*-horses were pulling your chariot, you could outstrip the beast." The rājā said: "Tell me more

about the *vāmi*-horses, or I will kill you." The rājā's outburst frightened the charioteer. He was afraid of the rājā, but equally afraid of Vāmadeva, so he kept silent. The rājā unsheathed his sword and threatened: "Tell me, *now*, or I kill you." The quavering charioteer said: "*Vāmi*-horses are those that belong to Vāmadeva; they are as swift as wind."

42 The rājā said: "Drive me to the ashram of ṛṣi Vāmadeva." Reaching the āshram, he spoke to the ṛṣi:

43 "*Bhagavan*, revered one, a deer wounded by me is escaping. Help me to catch it; give me a pair of *vāmi*-horses." The ṛṣi replied, "You can have a pair of *vāmi*-horses, but they must be returned to me after the hunt." The king took the horses with the ṛṣi's permission, yoked them to his chariot, and chased the deer. Outside the ashram precincts, he said to his charioteer: "Brahmins don't deserve to own these jewel-like horses. I will not - return them to Vāmadeva." He killed the deer, returned to his capital, and hid the *vāmi*-horses in the inner apartments of the palace.

44 The ṛṣi said to himself, "He's a young prince. He's found a fine pair of horses and likes them so much that he won't return them to me. Aho, what a problem!"

45 After a month had passed, he said to one of his disciples:

46 "Atreya, go to the rājā and ask him what he has done with the *vāmi*-horses. They should be returned to his teacher." The disciple repeated those words before the rājā, who replied: "These horses are fit for rājās. Brahmins don't need such precious jewels. What do Brahmins have to do with horses awyway? Go back and do not harass me."

47 He returned and repeated this to his teacher. Vāmadeva was at first distressed; then angry. He personally went to the rājā and demanded the horses.

48 "Return me my horses!
They have helped you achieve
the otherwise impossible.
The fierce noose of Varuṇa
awaits the transgressors
of Kṣatriya-Brahmin codes."

49 “These two bulls, Vāmadeva,
docile and well-trained,”
answered the rājā,
“are worthy of Brahmins.
Take them and go.
The Vedas are your vehicles!”

50 “The Vedas are vehicles
for people like us –
but in the next world.
In this world, rājā,
I need horses like these
to carry me and others.”

51 “Take four mules,” said the rājā,
“four asses if you like,
or four wind-swift horses.
The pair of *vāmi*-horses
are fit only for Kṣatriyas –
they are not for you.”

52 “I'm a fierce-vowed Brahmin,”
Vāmadeva said. “O rājā!”
May four fierce rākṣasas
of horrendous appearance
and cast-iron bodies
pursue you and kill you,
cut you in four pieces,
displaying each piece
on their sharp lances.”

53 “O Vāmadeva,” said the king,
“may those who know
that you as a Brahmin,
in thought, word, and deed,
are contemplating murder,
use their bright swords
and terrible lances
and cut you and your disciples
down at my feet.”

54 "O rājā," answered Vāmadeva,
"when you came and took
those two *vāmi*-horses,
you vowed to return them.
Give me back my horses,
and be assured of life."

55 "Hunting," said the rājā,
"is not for Brahmins.
I could punish you for lying;
instead, I'll be patient, O Brahmin,
and listen to your words,
and hope to be saved."

56 "A Brahmin," replied Vāmadeva,
"can never be punished
in thought, word, or deed.
The wise man who knows this
after deep tapasyā,
achieves great prominence."

57 Even as he said this, O rājā,
four horrendous-featured
rākṣasas arose,
with lances uplifted
and rushed at the rājā,
who shouted aloud:

58 "If all the Ikṣvākus,
if Dala my brother,
if all the Vaiśyas
asked me to do so,
I would not give the horses.
I will not be forced."

59 While he was shouting,
rākṣasas pounced on him;
the earth-lord collapsed.
Hearing of his death,
the Ikṣvākus installed
Dala on the throne.

60 The Brahmin Vāmadeva
went to his kingdom
and said to king Dala:
"It is part of one's dharma
that men should always
give presents to Brahmins.

61 If you are afraid
of committing adharma,
give me my horses."
The king heard Vāmadeva,
and angrily turned
and said to his charioteer:

62 "Fetch me but one
of those exquisitely-poisoned
arrows you carry –
I'll kill Vāmadeva
and let dogs gnaw
at his twitching body."

63 "O Indra-among-rājās," said Vāmadeva,
"your son is Śyenajit,
ten years old.
I command you today –
pick up that arrow
and kill your beloved son!"

64 No sooner had Vāmadeva
uttered this order, O rājā,
than the prince was pierced
in an inner room.
When he learnt of this,
Dala said fiercely:

65 "Listen, O Ikṣvākus!
I do you good today!
I will kill this Brahmin!
Fetch me another
of those dazzling arrows!
Watch my skill today!"

66 “The fearful and venomous
arrow you point at me,”
Vāmadeva replied,
“you are powerless to shoot.
You cannot aim it,
you cannot shoot it.”

67 The rājā said, “Ikṣvākus!
Listen to his words!
Indeed, I am unable
to shoot this arrow;
I cannot kill him.
Long life is his!”

68 Vāmadeva advised:
“Touch your queen with this arrow,
and be cleansed of your crime.”
The king did as asked;
and the princess said
to ṛṣi Vāmadeva:

69 “Give me strength, Vāmadeva,
to educate this foolish
husband of mine
with the sweetest advice.
May I honour Brahmins
and reach the holy realms.”

70 “Lovely-eyed lady, princess,”
said Vāmadeva,
“you have saved this house.
Ask any boon.
I will grant your wish.
Rule the Ikṣvākus!”

71 “Revered one,” said the princess,
“only one boon I ask –
may no ill befall my husband,
may you think highly
of his son and kinsmen.
O Brahmin! This is my wish.”

72 Foremost-of-the-Kurus Yudhiṣṭhira!
Vamadeva heard her
and said, "So be it."
The rājā rejoiced and,
praṇāma-ing the ṛṣi,
returned the *vāmi*-horses.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-THREE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
The ṛṣis, Brahmins and Yudhiṣṭhira asked Mārkaṇḍeya how the ṛṣi Baka came to be so long-lived. Mārkaṇḍeya said to them:

2 "The royal ṛṣi Baka of mahā tapasyā was indeed long-lived. You need not think otherwise."

3 O descendant of Bharata!
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
and his brothers again asked
the ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya:

4 "We have been told
that Dalbhya's son Baka of mahā-tapasyā
was not only long-lived
but a close friend of Śakra-Indra.

5 *Bhagavan,* revered one,
I want to hear about the meeting
of Śakra-Indra and Baka
fraught with bittersweet poignance."

6 When the horipilating war
between the gods and anti-gods ended
(Mārkaṇḍeya said),
Indra became the lord of the worlds.

7 Abundant rain fell; harvests were over-full.
No malice, no envy;
all followed dharma;
all did their duties of dharma.

8 Abiding by their sva-dharma,
 all people were happy.
Seeing all the world's people happy,
 the slayer of Bala,

9 The rājā of the gods Śatakrata-Indra
 was himself delighted.
Seated on the celestial elephant Airāvata,
 he surveyed his subjects,

10 The āshrams, the entrancing rivers,
 prosperous towns and villages,
the countryside –
 all happily affluent.

11 He saw kings looking after the welfare
 of their subjects with dharma:
he saw tanks,
 reservoirs, wells, lakes,

12 Near where the excellent twice-born lived,
 practising brahmacarya.
Alighting on the lovely earth,
 O rājā,

13 Indra went to an auspicious land
 that had an abundance of trees,
near the eastern coast.
 There he noticed

14 An enchanting āshram
 filled with birds and beasts.
The rājā of the gods saw Baka
 in that āshram.

15 Baka, seeing Devendra-Indra,
 was overjoyed.
He offered *arghya*-water to wash his feet,
 and fruits and roots.

16 Sitting in a relaxed pose,
 the boon-granting slayer of Bala,
the lord of heaven,
 asked Baka:

17 “Defectless muni,
you have lived a hundred thousand years.
Brahmin, tell me the woes
of the long-lived.”

18 Baka replied:
“Those who live too long must suffer
toleration of those who are disagreeable,
separation from those who are agreeable and lovable,
association with those who are vicious.

19 What suffering can exceed
the passing-away of sons and wives,
of kinsmen and friends?
What suffering can exceed
the laceration of having to depend on others?

20 What sight is there more pitiful
than seeing a poverty-stricken man
mocked by a fellow-being who has money?

21 To live long is to see
family dignity pass into the hands of the undeserving,
and pass out of the hands of the deserving;
it is to see unions and dissensions.

22 O deity of a thousand sacrifices, Śatakratu-Indra,
what greater pain is there than to see
the undignified prosper?
This must the long-lived see.

23 What greater sorrow can there be than to see
the gods humbled,
and also the anti-gods, gandharvas, men,
nāgas, and rākṣasas?

24 What greater sorrow can there be than to see
the high-born insulted and ruled by the low-born?
the poor insulted by the rich?

25 Countless examples of such reversals
can be seen in the world.
The ignorant are happy, the wise miserable.

26 There is no end to the world's suffering."
Indra said:
"Fortune-favoured one, the god-and-ṛṣi-adored

27 Joys of those who live long –
tell me about these too."
Baka replied:
"He who cooks vegetables during
the eighth or twelfth part of the day in his own home –

28 And has no hypocrite for friend –
who is happier than he?
The man who does not have to count his days
is the free man: he is not Time's glutton.

29 The man who lives on a few vegetables
he cooks himself, not depending on others –
who is happier than he, O Maghavan-Indra?

30 Happy the man who eats fruits and vegetables
in his own house.
Miserable he who eats rich and delicious food
offered condescendingly in another's house.

31 The food
that a wretch gobbles like a dog
in someone else's house –

32 'Shame on that food and that eater!'
say the wise.
After feeding guests and servants,
after offering to the *pitṛs,* a Brahmin

33 Should eat what remains.
What happiness is greater than this?
O god of a thousand sacrifices, Śatakratu-Indra,
nothing is holier, nothing is sweeter

34 Than the food eaten by a person
after the guests have had a portion.
Each mouthful of a Brahmin's meal
after the guests have eaten

35 Brings the fruits of a thousand-cow gift.
All the demerits of one's youth
are immediately wiped away.

36 If the water on the hands of a Brahmin
who has been fed and offered *dakṣiṇā*
is sprinkled,
the demerits of the host are instantly destroyed."

37 Devendra-Indra discussed
this and other sacred matters
with ṛṣi Baka,
and returned to heaven.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-FOUR

1 The Pāṇḍavas said to Mārkaṇḍeya:

2 "You have presented to us the glory of Brahmins. We would now like to hear about the glory of the Kṣatriyas." The mahā-ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya said to them: I will expound the glory of the Ksatriyas. A rājā of the Kuru dynasty called Suhotra went to meet some great ṛṣis; on his way back he chanced on Śibi's, son Uśīnara. They offered each other pūjā-respect as befitting each other's age. But each considered himself more talented than the other, and neither would permit right of way. Nārada happened to come along: "Why are you two blocking each other's way?"

3 They said to Nārada: "*Bhagavan,* revered one, don't say that. The handers of tradition have declared the right of way should go to the superior or abler person. We block each other because we are exactly equal. A careful assessment will show neither superior nor inferior in any way." Nārada chanted the following ślokas:

4 "Cruel is cruel to humble,
Humble is humble to proud;
Honest is honest to dishonest –
So why not honest to honest?

5 Honest considers kindness
Hundred times greater than it is.
The gods have this custom.
Uśīnara's son Śibi undoubtedly
Has more goodness than you.

6 Conquer smallness by largeness,
Untruth by truth,
Wickedness by forgiveness,
Cruelty by kindness.

7 Both of you are generous-minded. Let one step aside, as advised in the ślokas." Narada said this, and stood silent. The Kuru descendant Suhotra walked around Śibi, praising his noble feats, gave him right of way, and proceeded to his destination.

8 In this way Nārada has praised the mahā-glory of the Kṣatriya rājās.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-FIVE

1 Mārkaṇḍeya said: Here is another story. One day king Yayāti, Nahuṣa's son, was sitting on his throne surrounded by an assembly of citizens, when a Brahmin arrived wanting wealth to give to his guru. He said: "O rājā, I come here to beg for the wealth that I pledged to my guru."

2 The rājā asked: *"Bhagavan,* revered one, tell me: what did you promise?"

3 The Brahmin replied:
"In this world when a man
asks for alms, he is hated.
I ask you, O king,
tell me how you feel
about my asking for alms
to give to my guru."

4 "When I give something,
I do not boast,"
said the rājā to the Brahmin.
"I listen to demands
that I can meet.
When I give, I am happy.

5 The Brahmin who asks
is dear to my heart –
I will give you exactly

one thousand cows.
I am not angered,
I never regret giving."

6 Saying this, the rājā
gave one thousand cows
to the Brahmin, and another thousand
to other Brahmins.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-SIX

1 "Tell us," said Pāṇḍavas, "more about the mahā-glory of the Kṣatriyas."

2 Mārkaṇḍeya said: Once upon a time there were two kings, Vṛṣadarbha and Seduka. Both of them, O mahārāja, were familiar with the ways of the world; they were also expert in military attack and defence.

3 Seduka knew that Vṛṣadarbha had taken a vow since childhood not to give anything to a Brahmin except gold and silver.

4 Once, a Brahmin who had completed his study of the Vedas came to Seduka, chanted blessings on him, and asked for wealth for his guru,

5 Saying, "Give me a thousand horses." Seduka said to the Brahmin,

6 "It is not possible for me to give so much guru-wealth.

7 Go to Vṛṣadarbha. He is wise in dharma. Ask him for wealth. He will give it – he has vowed to do so."

8 So the Brahmin hurried to Vṛṣadarbha and asked for a thousand horses. The rājā struck him with a whip.

9 "I am innocent," protested the Brahmin. "Why do you strike me?"

10 He was about to curse the rājā when Vṛṣadarbha said, "Will you curse the man who does not give you what you ask? Is such behaviour expected of a Brahmin?"

11 The Brahmin replied, "Seduka sent me, and I came to you for guru-wealth, O rājā-of-rājās."

12 "I will give you whatever wealth-tribute I receive before morning ends," said the rājā. "How can I send away a man empty-handed after whipping him?"

13 He gave the Brahmin all the wealth-tribute he received that morning – which was much more in value than a thousand horses.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-SEVEN

1 One day (Mārkaṇḍeya continued) the gods resolved to go to earth and test the goodness of the earth-ruler Śibi. "Good!" said Agni and Indra, and descended on earth.

2 Agni came as a fleeing pigeon, and Indra as the pursuing hawk.

3 The pigeon dropped in the lap of rājā Śibi who was relaxing on a luxurious seat.

4 The purohita said to the rājā, "This pigeon, terrified of the hawk, has come to you for shelter.

5 The learned say that a pigeon dropping in one's lap is an ill omen. A rājā should in such a case avert calamity by donating wealth."

6 The pigeon said to the rājā, "Pursued by the hawk, fearing for my life, I come for your help. I am a muni. I come to you as a pigeon. I put my life in your hands. You are my life.

7 I am wise in the Vedas, I am a brahmacārī, I practise self-discipline and tapasyā. I have never spoken one harsh word against my ācārya, I am strong in yoga, I am without ill-deed.

8 I recite the Vedas,
I know their prosody
syllable by syllable.
I am not a pigeon.
O do not surrender me
to the hawk.
A gift that involves
giving away a good man
cannot be noble."

9 The hawk said to the king:

10 "Creatures are re-born
among different species.
The pigeon, it seems,
was once your ancestor!
Do not, O rājā,
snatch away my food."

11 "Since when," said the king,
"have birds started speaking?
I have heard the pigeon,
I have heard the hawk;
but who is in the right –
how am I to know?

12 The man who surrenders
a creature seeking asylum,
finds himself friendless
when he is in need.
Clouds will not rain for him,
seeds will not sprout for him.

13 The man who surrenders
a creature seeking asylum,
will see his children die
in their infancy – the gods
will refuse his oblations,
he will never find heaven.

14 The man who surrenders
a creature seeking asylum,
becomes the thunderbolt-target
of the gods led by Indra.
His food is unsanctified,
he soon falls from heaven.

15 Hawk, let Śibi offer
you bull-flesh in rice
instead of this pigeon.
Let all the Śibis
serve you abundant meat
wherever you desire."

16 “Rājā,” replied the hawk,
“I do not want bull-meat
or any but pigeon-meat.
This pigeon is my food:
the gods have ordained it.
Give him to me.”

17 Śibi said, “O hawk,
I will have my men carry
a whole bull for you.
Take that bull instead
of this shivering bird.
Do not kill this pigeon.

18 I will give up my life,
but not this pigeon.
See how gentle he is!
Hawk, don’t even try –
I have made up mind:
I won’t give him up.

19 But if this appeals to you,
ask from me anything
else that you desire –
which, if I grant,
will earn me the praise
of the Śibi race.
I give you my word:
whatever you ask,
I will provide.”

20 The hawk said: “If you give me flesh equal to the pigeon’s weight, cut from your right thigh, the pigeon’s life will be spared, O rājā, and you will do something that will earn you not only my gratitude but the approval of the Śibi race as well.”

21 So the king sliced off a piece of flesh from his right thigh, and weighed it against the pigeon. The pigeon was heavier.

22 So he cut off another slice. The pigeon was still heavier. He cut off slices of flesh from all parts of his body and placed them on the scale. The bird continued to be heavier.

23 Finally the rājā himself ascended the scale. He did so without the least hesitation. The hawk saw this and disappeared, shouting "Saved!" The rājā said:

24 "My pigeon, my bird,
tell the Śibis now
the hawk's true identity.
Who but the Creator
can do what he did?
Revered one, reply."

25 "Son of Suratha, listen:
I am the Fire-god
whose banner is smoke,
the hawk is Indra,
you a man excellent;
we came here to test you.

26 The flesh that you sliced
from all over your body
has left gaping wounds –
I will sanctify them:
they will be golden,
fragrant, eye-pleasing.

27 You will become famous,
respected by gods,
you will rule long.
From your right thigh will be born
a son whose name
will be Kapotaromā.

28 This son will be born out of your own flesh, the son named Kapotaromā, the 'Hairless Pigeon'. He will become one of the foremost bull-brave heroes of the Śibi race, dazzling in fame, prowess, and good looks," said the pigeon.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-EIGHT

1 The Pāṇḍavas said to Mārkaṇḍeya: "Tell us more of such glories." Mārkaṇḍeya said: All the rājās of the world attended the Horse-Yajña of Aṣṭaka, Viśvāmitra's descendant.

2 His brothers – Pratardana, Vasumanā, and Uśīnara's son Śibi – also were present. After the yajña he was returning with his brothers in a chariot when he met Nārada. They greeted Nārada respectfully and said, "Come with us in this chariot."

3 Nārada agreed, and climbed into the chariot. One of the brothers said to Nārada, "If it pleases you, O divine ṛṣi, I would like to ask you a question."

4 Nārada said, "You may ask." He said: "All four of us are long-lived and possess every virtue there is. We will certainly go to some part of heaven and live there for a long time. But who will be the first to fall from heaven?" The ṛṣi replied, "Aṣṭaka."

5 "Why?" asked the brother. The ṛṣi replied: "I lived a few days in Aṣṭaka's palace. One day he drove me out of the city in his chariot. I saw thousands of cows of different shades. I asked him whose they were. He said, 'Oh, I gave them as gifts.' Self-praise; so he will fall first." The brother asked, "Of those remaining, who will fall first?"

6 The ṛṣi replied, "Pratardana." "Pratardana. Why?" "I lived in Pratardana's palace too. Once he drove me out in his chariot.

7 On the way a Brahmin said to him, 'Give me a horse.' He replied, 'When I return, I will give you one.' The Brahmin insisted, 'I want one now.' So he unharnessed the right-wheel horse and gave it to the Brahmin.

8 Another Brahmin stopped him, also wanting a horse. he unharnessed the left-wheel horse and gave it to him. He was about to leave when another horse-seeking Brahmin stopped him. He gifted the chariot's left-front-horse.

9 He was stopped by yet another Brahmin looking for a horse. He said, 'Let me return, and I will give you one.' The Brahmin said, 'I want one now.' He gave the Brahmin the only horse remaining. Harnessing himself to the chariot, he began pulling and said, 'I have nothing left to gave to Brahmins. Such Brahmins!'

10 He certainly gave in charity, but flippantly. So he will fall first." He was asked, "Two brothers remain. Which will fall first?"

11 The ṛṣi replied, "Vasumanā."

12 "Why?" Nārada said, "Once, in the course of my travels, I came to Vasumanā's house.

13 He was busy with the Svastivācana ritual for a flower-chariot when I arrived. When the Svastivācana ended, the flower-chariot materialised in front of Brahmins.

14 I praised the chariot. The rājā said, 'Noble ṛṣi, since you like the chariot, let it be yours.'

15 Some time later, I had occasion to re-visit him. I was badly in need of a chariot. The rājā said, 'Take it. It is yours.' I went a third time to him and praised a chariot. The rājā exhibited the flower-chariot to the Brahmins and said to me, 'Noble one, you are very generous in your praise of the flower-chariot.' That was all. So he will fall first."

16 He was asked, "Of the two of you, who will fall first?" Nārada said, "Śibi will remain. I will fall." "Why?" Nārada replied, "I am not Śibi's equal. One day a Brahmin came to Śibi and said, 'O Śibi, I come to you for food.'

17 Śibi replied, 'Tell me what I should do.'

18 The Brahmin said, 'Kill your son Bṛhadgarbha, cook him with your own hands, and serve him to me.' I waited and watched. Śibi killed his son, cooked him in the right way, put the meat in a pot and, placing the pot on his head, went to search for the Brahmin.

19 A man stopped him on the way, saying, 'The Brahmin you're looking for has angrily set fire to your palace, your treasury, your arsenal, your apartments for females, and your stables for horses and elephants.'

20 Śibi heard this without flinching. He returned to the city and said to the Brahmin, '*Bhagavan,* revered one, the food is ready.' The Brahmin was silent. Ashamed, he stood there with downcast eyes.

21 Śibi kept honouring the Brahmin, saying, 'Revered one, eat.' He looked quickly at Śibi and said:

22 'Eat it yourself.' Śibi said, 'Whatever you say,' and without any hesitation lowered the pot and sat down to eat.

23 The Brahmin caught his hand and said, 'You have conquered anger. There is nothing you will not give to a Brahmin.' Then the Brahmin honoured glorious Śibi.

24 Śibi saw, standing in front of him, his son, like a celestial youth – wearing splendid ornaments on a fragrant body. The Brahmin did this and disappeared.

25 The Creator Vidhātā himself had come in disguise to test the royal ṛṣi. After Vidhātā had vanished, the ministers said to the rājā, 'You know everything. What made you do what you did?"

26 'I did what I did
not for fame, not for wealth,'
said the royal Śibi,
'nor indeed for pleasure.
I did what I did
because the wicked would not do it.

27 What the virtuous do
is what I must do,
their path is my path.' "
This (said Mārkaṇḍeya)
is the glory of Śibi –
so I tell it to you.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-NINE

1 The ṛṣis and Pāṇḍavas again aksed Mārkaṇḍeya: "Is there anyone who has longer life than you?"

2 He replied: Yes – a rāja-ṛṣi named Indradyumna. His merits exhausted, he fell from heaven shouting, "My glory is gone!" He came to me and asked, "Do you know me?"

3 I replied, "Seeking virtue, we move from place to place. We pass no more than a single night in village or town. People like us cannot be expected to recognise you immediately. Our fasts and vows weaken our bodies, so we cannot engage in such worldly activities as the pursuit of wealth." Indradyuumna asked, "Is there anyone who was born earlier than you?"

4 I replied, "There is an owl called Prāvārakarṇa that lives in the Himālayas. He is older than I. He may know you. Where he lives is very far from here."

5 Indradyumna transformed himself to a horse and took me to the owl's habitation. The rājā asked the owl, "Do you know me?"

6 The owl reflected briefly and replied, "No, I don't know you." The rāja-ṛṣi Indradyumna asked again:

7 "Is there anyone older than you?" The owl replied, "Yes – in a lake called Indradyumna is a crane called Nādījaṅgha. He is older than us. Go and ask him." So Indradyumna took me and the owl to the lake where Nādījaṅgha lived.

8 We asked the crane: "Do you know this rājā – Indradyumna?" He thought for a while and replied, "I do not know rājā Indradyumna." So we asked, "Is there anyone older than you?" He replied, "Yes – in this lake is a tortoise called Akūpāra. He is older. He may know this rājā. Ask Akūpāra."

9 The crane shouted to the tortoise Akūpāra: "We have a question of you. Please come out." The tortoise emerged from the lake and came to the bank where we were all

gathered. We asked him, "Do you know this rājā – Indradyumna?"

10 He thought for a moment. His eyes filled with tears. He seemed all agitated. He trembled and almost lost control of his senses. He joined his palms in *añjali*, and said, "How is it I don't know this king who planted one thousand yajña-poles?

11 This lake was created by the hooves of the cows which this rājā gave to Brahmins as *dakṣiṇā* when the yajña was completed. I have lived here since that time."

12 As we were listening to the tortoise, a celestial chariot arrived and a dismebodied voice was heard proclaiming: *Come and dwell in the place of your desires, come to the place suiting your glory.*

13 The following ślokas are relevant:

> The fame of good deeds
> spreads even to heaven;
> as long as his fame lasts,
> he lives in heaven.

14
> When ill deeds are spread,
> he falls from heaven;
> he lives in the lower regions
> as long as his ill-fame.

15
> Seek others' welfare
> if you want heaven;
> avoid evil thoughts,
> seek refuge in Dharma.

16 The rājā heard all this and said: "Let the chariot stay here so long as I do not take the old creatures back to the places from where I brought them."

17 So he escorted me and the owl to our homes, and went away in the chariot to the celestial region which he deserved. I experienced this in the course of my long life. – This is what Mārkaṇḍeya narrated to the Pāṇḍavas.

18 The Pāṇḍavas said: "You acted rightly in helping rājā Indradyumna to regain the heaven he had fallen from." Mārkaṇḍeya replied: "Devakī's son Krishna similarly saved the rāja-ṛṣi Nṛga who had fallen into hell; he helped him regain heaven."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED

1 Mahārāja! After listening
to Mārkaṇḍeya's account
of how the royal ṛṣi Indradyumna
regained heaven, heroic

2 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira asked the muni:
"O mahā-muni,
what are the means of charity
by which a man

3 Can attain the realm of Indra?
Tell me this.
Does he have to practise charity
as a householder,
in boyhood, youth, or old age?
Describe charity."

4 "Four kinds of life are useless,"
replied Mārkaṇḍeya,
"and sixteen kinds of charity.
Useless the life
if no son is born,
useless the life without dharma,

5 The life dependant on food
from another,
the life where one cooks
for oneself only,
without first offering to *pitṛs,* gods,
and guests.

6 Gifts to one who has slipped in goodness,
gifts of wrongly-earned,
gifts of dishonestly-earned wealth,
gifts to a Brahmin
who has strayed, gifts to a thief –
these all useless.

7 Gifts to a liar, a false guru,
to a performer
of impure rituals for villagers,
to a Śūdra yajña-performer,
a seller of the Vedas,
to Brahmins who cook for Śūdras,

8 To one born Brahmin
but not living as one, –
are all useless. Gifts to one
who plays with snakes,
to menials, to women,
to a man who has married
a menstruating twelve-year old girl –
are all useless.

9 These are the sixteen gifts
that are useless.
The man who gives charity
out of fear or anger,

10 Enjoys the fruits of his gift
while he is a foetus.
The man who gives to Brahmins
enjoys till old age.

11 O king! So the man who wishes to reach
the goal of heaven
should always give charity
to excellent Brahmins."

12 "How do Brahmins," asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
"who accept gifts
from all the four castes
save others and themselves?"

13 "By *japa*, mantras, and *homa,"*
replied Mārkaṇḍeya,
"by Veda-studies they build
a Veda-boat of salvation.

14 The gods themselves are pleased
with a man who pleases Brahmins.
A Brahmin's blessings can obtain heaven
for a man.

15 You will definitely go to heaven,
because you have offered pūjā
to the *pitṛs*
and you have honoured Brahmins.

16 If a weak-bodied, cough-ridden man
desires heaven,
let him do so by the merit
of honouring Brahmins.

17 Feed them at *śrāddha*-rites;
but cursed or fallen,
over-handsome, over-dark, dirty-nailed,
deceitful, leprous, bastard

18 Brahmins – shun them.
Shun those born of widows,
or to women whose husbands are away,
or those who live
by making arrows. Such a *śrāddha*
will consume its performer
even as fire consumes
fuel-wood.

19 If Brahmins who assist in a *śrāddha*
are dumb, blind, or deaf,
always seek the additional help
of Veda-learned Brahmins.

20 Let me tell you, Yudhiṣṭhira,
what should be given away.
Such giving is the salvation
of giver and receiver.

21 The Veda-knowing donor
should give only to such Brahmins
as will save both
giver and receiver.

22 Ghee libations, floral offerings
and sandalpaste gifts
do not please the sacred fire so much
as hospitality to guests.

23 Be generous with guests.
Give water to wash the feet,
cream to massage his tired legs,
lamp, food, shelter –

24 And you will escape Yama's realm. O rājā!
Removing the flower-garlands offered to gods,
removing the remnants
of a Brahmin's meal,

25 Waiting on him with perfumes,
shampooing his legs, O finest of kings –
these bring better fruits
than large gifts of cows.

26 A man can save himself
by giving away a *kapilā*-cow;
so give an onamented *kapilā*
to a Brahmin.

27 Give to the high-born,
the Veda-learned, the poor,
the householder burdened
with wife and children,
the *homa*-devotee, and to one
who cannot reciprocate your gift.

28 Remember, O excellent Bharata,
always to give to such;
never to the rich.
Why give wealth to the already wealthy?

29 One cow to one Brahmin;
never one cow to many.
If the given to many is sold,
three generations
of the donor's family are certain
to be doomed.

30 Such a gift saves neither the giver
nor the receiving Brahmin.
The donor of gold
to a pure Brahmin

31 Receives the merits of giving away
a hundred gold coins for ever.
The donor
of a strong plough-pulling ox

32 Is sure to escape all calamity;
he will get heaven.
The donor of land
to a highly learned Brahmin.

33 Finds fulfilment of all desires.
A tired traveller,
weak-limbed, dust-smeared,
enquires about a food-giver.

34 Some volunteer the information;
those who tell the tired traveller
the names of the givers
of food,

35 Are equal in merit
to the food-givers themselves.
Even if you do not give other gifts,
give food.

36 No merit is greater than to give
wholesome, well-cooked food to Brahmins,
in accordance
with one's capacity.

37 Such an act gets a man
the realm of Prajāpati.
Nothing excels a food-gift.
Food is first and foremost.

38 It is said food is Prajāpati.
Prajāpati is the Year,
the Year is Yajña;
the source of all is Yajña-Sacrifice.

39 From Yajña emerges
all moving and unmoving life;
therefore, food is first and foremost.
So have we heard.

40 The donors of lakes,
tanks, wells and ponds,
the donors of food
and sweet-worded kindness,
have never to fear
the fury of Yama.

41 The giver of rice
and self-earned wealth
to well-behaved Brahmins,
is beloved of Earth.
Mother Earth showers
rewards upon him.

42 The food-giver walks first;
then comes the truth-speaker;
then the giver to one
who has not asked.
All these three givers, however,
reach the same goal."

43 Yudhiṣṭhira, eager to learn,
along with his brothers,
again questioned mahā-ātmaned Mārkaṇḍeya
(continued Vaiśampāyana):

44 "Mahā-muni,
how far is the realm of Yama
from the region of men?
What are its measurements?
How does one cross it?
Tell me all these details."

45 "Best among men of dharma,"
said Mārkaṇḍeya,
"that is a great mystery,
a sacred mystery, O rājā,
which ṛṣis ponder and praise.
Let me explain it.

46 O ruler of men, the distance between
the realm of Yama
and the abode of men
is eighty-six thousand *yojanas.*

47 It lies across a waterless,
terrifying stretch of *ākāśa*-space:
no shade, no tree, no resting-place
in that region.

48 Nowhere for a tired traveller
even to rest briefly.
Messengers of Yama, obeying his orders,
forcibly drag

49 Men, women and other living creatures
along this way.
Those who gave houses and other animals
to Brahmins,

50 Travel on this path on those animals.
Those that gave umbrellas
travel on this path
sun-shaded by those umbrellas.

51 The food-givers travel
without ever feeling hungry;
those who denied food, travel famished.
Those who gave clothes travel well-dressed;
those who did not,
travel named.

52 Those who gave gold go happily,
adorned with ornaments.
Those who gave land
travel with all desires satisfied.

53 Those who gave grains
travel without any serious wants;
those who gave houses
travel in fine chariots.

54 Those who gave cows
travel without feeling thirsty;
those who gave lamps
are happy with lights guiding them.

55 Those who gave cows travel happily,
cleansed of ill-deeds;
Those who fasted for a month
travel by *haṁsa*-swan-drawn chariots.

56 Those who fasted for six nights
have peacock-pulled chariots.
Those who eat once in three nights
go to a realm

57 Where no disease or worry afflicts;
those who give water
are rewarded with happiness
in the realm of the dead,

58 For they see a river called Puṣpodaka,
whose cool waters
have the taste
of ambrosial nectar.

59 The doer of bad karma
drinks pus from that river –
which is his fate.
Mahārāja, that river fulfils all desires.

60 O Indra-among-rājās!
Pay respect to the Brahmins with you.
Travel-weary, covered with dust,
the traveller

61 Enquires about the man
who offers food and goes to his house
Worship that food-giver:
he is the true Brahmīn.

62 When he walks,
the gods led by Vāsava-Indra follow him.
If he is respected with pūjā, they are pleased;
if not, they are dejected.

63 O Indra-among-rājās Yudhiṣṭhira!
Offer pūjā-respect.
to these Brahmins.
I have discoursed to you
upon a hundred topics.
Is there anything more that you wish?"

64 "Wise-in-dharma ṛṣi!" Yudhiṣṭhira! exclaimed.
"Instruct me again and again
on matters concerning
dharma and virtue."

65 "King," replied Mārkaṇḍeya,
"I will speak on a dharma-related subject;
redemption from ill-deeds.
Listen carefully.

66 Excellent Bharata,
washing the feet of a Brahmin
brings the same merit
as giving a *kapilā*-cow in Puṣkara.

67 For as long as the earth is wet with water
touched by a Brahmin's feet,
the *pitṛs* will drink water
from lotus-leaves.

68 Welcome to a guest is happiness to Agni.
A guest seated,
is Śatakratū-Indra pleased.
His feet washed, are *pitṛs* delighted.
A guest fed,
is Prajāpati-Brahmā gratified.

69 Give away happily a cow
when the hooves and head of her calf
are visible,
before complete delivery.

70 A cow thus given,
with her calf supended
between uterus and earth,
equals the gift of the earth itself.

71 Such a giver, Yudhiṣṭhira,
receives veneration in heaven
for as many thousand yugas
as there are hairs
on the bodies of the mother-cow
and her calf.

72 The person who gives away
a gold decorated, sesamum-sprinkled black cow,
and the person
who, receiving it,

73 Re-gifts it immediately
to a noble and honest man,
obtain the most remarkable merit;
their reward

74 Is no less than the whole earth itself,
with all its wealth
of seas, oceans, hills,
caves and forests.

75 The Brahmin who eats silently
from a plate,
keeping his hands between his knees,
saves others;

76 Also the Brahmin who does not drink liquor,
and is said by others to be faultless,
and reads daily
from the Vedas.

77 *Havya* ghee-libations and *kavya* food-offerings
should be given
to a Veda-learned Brahmin.
Never wasted
is a libation to Agni
or a gift to such a Brahmin.

78 Wrath is the Brahmin's weapon,
not steel or iron.
His wrath kills enemies,
like thunder kills the anti-gods.

79 Defectless one, that is the truth
about dharma and virtue.
The Naimiṣa-forest munis heard it,
and were delighted.

80 O rājā! Cleansed of ill-deeds,
freed from grief, fear, and passion,
all hearing it
are freed from rebirth."

81 "O best of dharma-knowers," Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"O vastly-wise me,
tell me about the purification
by which a Brahmin remains always pure."

82 "There are three kinds of purity,"
replied Mārkaṇḍeya,
"purity of speech, of deed, of body.
These lead to heaven.

83 The Brahmin who worships
during *saṁdhyā*-morning-twilight
and *saṁdhyā*-evening-twilight,
and recites the Gāyatrī,
which is considered to be
the mother of the Vedas,

84 Is purified by the mantra
and cleansed of all his misdeeds.
Accepting the ocean-girdled earth as gift
cannot corrupt him.

85 Inauspicious and hostile planets,
including the sun,
become auspicious and beneficial
for such a man.
Auspicious and beneficial ones
become even more so.

86 The carnivorous rākṣasas
with horrendous mahā-bodies
cannot harm a Brahmin
who practises such purification.

87 Such a Brahmin shines like fire.
No fault attaches to him
when teaching, doing yajña,
or accepting gifts.

88 Whether learned in the Vedas or not,
whether uncultured or cultured,
Brahmins should never be insulted
and angered;
they are like sparks,
briefly hidden under ashes.

89 A Brahmin is like a god.
The fire of a funeral pyre is never impure;
neither is a Brahmin,
whether whether learned or foolish.

90 Cities with beautiful gates and walls and palaces
lose their attractiveness
if Brahmins
do not live in them.

91 A city is really a eity
when it is inhabited
by Veda-learned Brahmins,
devoted to study and tapasyā.

92 Forest or pasturage –
where learned Brahmins live,
son of Pṛthā-Kuntī, is a city.
It is also a *tīrtha.*

93 If one goes to a rājā
who protects his subjects
and to a Brahmin of great tapasyā,
and gives pūjā-respect to both,
one is instantly cleansed
of all ill-deeds.

94 Wise men have said
that bathing in sacred *tīrthas,*
chanting *kīrtanas,* and talking to good men,
are praiseworthy deeds.

95 The virtuous and honest
consider themselves sanctified
by the company of others
who are virtuous and honest,
and purified by the water
of inspiring conversation.

96 Carrying the triple staff,
observing the vow of silence,
growing matted locks,
shaving off the crown-hair,
wearing bark-dress and deer-skin,
performing ablutions,

97 Doing the *agnihotṛ* ritual,
living in the forest,
emaciating the body – all are futile
if the heart is not pure.

98 Indulging the senses is easy
if purity is not desired,
O Indra-among-rājās.
Abstinence is difficult if purity is not desired.
The most slippery of the senses
is the mind.

99 The noble men who refrain from evil
in word, deed, and heart
are the mahātmās of tapasyā,
not the fast-observers and flesh-mortifiers.

100 The man who does not feel affection
for his relatives
cannot escape evil, no matter how pure
he keeps his body.
The hardness of his mind is a great bar
to tapasyā.

101 That man is pure who, virtue-endowed,
shows compassion in his domestic life.
He is the muni,
free from evil.

102 Fasts and other self-denials
can only emaciate
the flesh-and-blood body;
they cannot destroy evil.

103 The impure man can only suffer terribly
by such penances;
the fire that he worships
cannot consume evil.

104 Only through virtue
can the final realm be reached,
only virtue can make vows and fasts
effective.
Eating roots and fruits, being silent,
subsisting on air,

105 Shaving off one's crown-hair,
abandoning a fixed habitation,
growing matted locks,
having the sky as one's roof,

106 Bathing in water, lying on the ground –
these are not ways
calculated to lead one
to perfection.

[III:200:107-114]

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107 Only by knowledge and karma
is it possible
to overcome disease, decay and death,
and reach the highest goal.

108 Seeds scorched by fire
cannot sprout into plants;
suffering in the fire of knowledge
does not harm the ātman.

109 Nothing but a block of wood
is the body without the ātman –
just a phenomenon fragile
like ocean-froth.

110 If one śloka or half a śloka
can reveal the Ātman
that dwells in all creatures,
what else is needed?

111 Some get it in two syllables,
some from hundreds of thousands of ślokas.
Such realisation
is the sign of mokṣa.

112 Wise old men say neither this world,
nor the next, nor any happiness
is for the doubter.
Self-realisation is mokṣa.

113 The man who knows the true meaning
of the Vedas is wise.
He shuns Vedic rituals
as he would a fire.

114 Give up arid dispute
abide by *śruti*-revelation and *smṛti*-tradition.
Use your reason to reach
the Undying One-without-a-second.
Any seeking is useless
if the method is not adequate.

115 Which is why knowledge
should be sought through the Vedas,
for they are the truth
and the essence of knowledge.
The flesh-fettered ātman
knows through the Vedas.

116 The existence of the gods,
the operation of karma,
the fruits of action as stated in the Vedas,
are proved in every yuga.

117 Freedom from and annihilation of karma
are achieved
by sense-purification.
The best fasting is discipline of the senses.

118 One can reach heaven by tapasyā,
get pleasure by charity,
destroy one's ill-deeds
by bathing in *tīrthas*,
but mokṣa is possible only
by means by knowledge."

119 Mahā-illustrious Yudhiṣṭhira listened to Mārkaṇḍeya
and said, "*Bhagavan*, revered one,
I want to know the benefits
obtaining from charity."

120 "O Indra-among-kings," replied Mārkaṇḍeya,
"I hold very precious
the dharma of charity
that you wish to know from me.

121 Yudhiṣṭhira! Listen to the mysteries of charity
as described
in the *śrutis* and *smṛtis.*
A man who performs *śrāddha*
under a pipal's shade enjoys its fruits
for a hundred thousand kalpas.

122 The man who offers food
to one dying of starvation,
and the man who founds a home of charity
with a supervisor –
both get the fruits
of all yajñas.

123 The man who gives away a horse
at a *tīrtha*
whose currents flow
in the opposite direction,
earns inexhaustible merit.
A guest coming to one's house
for a meal is Parjanya-Indra himself.
Feeding him earns inexhaustible merit.
The host crosses mahā-evils,
as boats cross rivers.

124 A gift of curds to Brahmins
brings inexhaustible merits.
A gift on a religious festival day
brings double merit,
a gift during a special season
ten times the merit.

125 A gift in a special year,
one hundred times.
A gift on the last day of the month
brings inexhaustible merit.
A gift during the sun's
solstitial course,
or on the last day of the sun's course
through Mithuna,
Kanyā, Dhanu, Mīna,
or during the eclipses
of either sun or moon,
gets endless merit.

126 Gifts in the seasons
bring ten times the merit;
during change of seasons,
a hundred-times' merit;
when Rāhu is visible,
a thousand-times' merst;
on the last day of the sun's course
through Viṣuvati,
everlasting merit.

127 None can enjoy land, O rājā,
who does not donate land,
none drive in chariots
without donating one.
A gift to a Brahmin
rewards the hopes of its giver.

128 From fire comes gold,
from Viṣṇu the earth,
from the sun come cows.
Who gives gold, land and cows
gets the regions of Agni,
Viṣṇu and Sūrya.

129 Nothing lasts like a gift.
There is nothing more auspicious
in all the three worlds.
Therefore, the wise say
nothing's greater in life
than giving a gift."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED ONE

1 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira heard from Mārkaṇḍeya
the story
of rājā-ṛṣi Indradyumna's attainment
of heaven;

2 Then, O bull-brave mahārāja Janamejaya
(said Vaiśampāyana),
he turned to the defectless long-living ṛṣi
and said:

3 "Wise-in-dharma ṛṣi,
you know all about the gods, the Dānava anti-gods,
rākṣasas, royal dynasties,
the lines of ṛṣis –

4 In fact, there is nothing in this world
you do not know, O twice-born one.
You know the histories of men, nāgas,
and rākṣasas,

5 Of gods, gandharvas, yakṣas, Kinnaras
and apsarās.
Excellent Brahmin, I want to know
all about them.

6 For instance, why did the invincible
descendant of Ikṣvāku,
known as Kuvalāśva, change his name
to Dhundhumāra?

7 Excellent Bhārgava,
I would like to know in detail
why the intelligent Kuvalāśva change his name
to Dhundhumāra.

8 Mahā-muni Mārkaṇḍeya listened to Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and narrated the following life-story
of Dhundhumāra,

9 Saying: Listen to me, rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
I will tell you all.
Dhundhumāra's story
is a tale of dharma.

10 O ruler of earth,
listen to this account
of how rājā Kuvalāśva of the Ikṣvākus
became Dhundumāra.

11 *Tātā*, child, descendant of Bharata, Kaurava,
there was a ṛṣi named Uttaṅka
who had an āshram
in an enchanting forest.

12 In order to obtain Viṣṇu's favour,
O mahārāja,
Uttaṅka performed severe tapasyā
for hundreds of years.

13 Bhagavān Viṣṇu, gratified, gave him darshan.
The moment he saw Viṣṇu,
he burst into songs
of glorifying praise:

14 "God!
The moving and unmoving life of the worlds,
The gods, anti-gods, humans,

15 Brahmā himself,
The Vedas,
All things that are capable of being known,
Are your creation.
O mahā-radiant Divinity!
The sky is your head,
The sun and the moon are your eyes.

16 Undecaying one!
The winds are your breath,
Fire your glory,
The directions your arms,
The ocean your stomach.

17 God! Deva!
Slayer of Madhu!
The mountains are your thighs,
The atmosphere your hips,
The earth-devī your feet,
The vegetation your body-hair.

18 Indra, Soma, Agni, and Varuṇa,
The gods, the anti-gods, the *uraga*-nāgas –
All wait on you
In adoration
Singing your praises.

19 O Lord of the earth,
Bhuvaneśvara!
All life is pervaded by you.
The mahā-ṛṣis and the mahā-shining yogīs
Sing your praises
In adoration.

20 Puruṣottama,
O finest of men,
When you are pleased,
The worlds are at peace;
When you are displeased,
Fear takes hold of all.
You are the sole dispeller of fear.

21 God! Deva!
You are the source of the happiness
Of gods and humans.
With your three steps
You straddle the three worlds.

22 You destroyed the anti-gods
At the height of their power,
Through your glory
The gods found peace and joy.

23 O mahā-shining one!
Your anger destroyed the Daityas.
You are the Maker and Breaker
Of the creatures of the world.

24 Worshipping you,
The gods obtained bliss and prosperity."
In this way, mahātmā Uttaṅka adored Viṣṇu.

25 Viṣṇu said to Uttaṅka,
"I am pleased. Ask a boon."
Uttaṅka said,
"Your darshan is a great boon, O Hari,

26 Lord and creator of the world,
O Eternal Puruṣa!"
Viṣṇu said: "I am impressed
by your supreme bhakti and humility.

27 Twice-born Brahmin, ask any boon from me:
do not hesitate."
Requested by Hari-Viṣṇu
to ask for a boon,

28 Uttaṅka did *añjali* before the deity,
O excellent Bharata, and said,
"Bhagavan, lotus-eyed god, if you are pleased
with my devotion,

29 Then, O Īśvara, make me firm
in dharma, truth, and self-control.
Let my mind
be devoted to you."

30 “O twice born one,” replied Viṣṇu,
“what you wish
will be done by my grace.
Through the yoga-power manifest

31 In you, you will perform a marvellous deed
for the gods and the three worlds.
A mahā-anti-god
called Dhundhu

32 In engaged in fierce tapasyā
to destroy the worlds.
Who will kill him?
A mighty, invincible Ikṣvāku rājā,

33 Known as Bṛhadaśva, an earth-ruler,
will have a son
called Kuvalāśva,
shining, self-controlled, pure.

34 That son will be infused with yoga-power
from me.
Ordered by you,
he will kill the anti-god Dhundhu.”
Saying this to the Brahmin Uttaṅka,
Viṣṇu disappeared.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWO

1 O rājā! When Ikṣvāku died,
his dharmatma son Śaśāda
became king and ruled over Ayodhyā
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya)

2 Śaśāda had valiant son
named Kākutstha.
Kākutstha’s son was Anenā,
and Anenā’s son was Pṛthu.

3 Pṛthu’s son was named Viśvagaśva,
Viśvagaśva’s son was Adri,
Adri’s son was Yuvanāśva,
Yuvanāśva’s son Śrāva.

4 Śrāva named a city after him,
called Śrāvastī.
Śrāva's son was the mahā-powerful
` prince Bṛhadaśva.

5 Bṛhadaśva was also known
as Kuvalāśva,
and Kuvalāśva was known
to have twenty-one thousand sons.

6 All of them were powerful and self-willed,
but they were very learned.
Kuvalāśva excelled his father
in everything.

7 Mahārāja, in course of time
Bṛhadaśva installed
his heroic and dharma-knowing son
on the throne.

8 Entrusting the kingdom to Kuvalāśva's charge,
the great foe-chastising world-ruler
retired to an āshram
to practise tapasyā.

9 O rājā! When the rājā-ṛṣi Bṛhadaśva
was about to leave for the forest,
finest-of-Brahmins Uttaṅka
heard about it.

10 The mahā-radiant Brahmin approached
the mighty wielder of arms,
excellent Bṛhadaśva,
asking him to give up his resolve.

11 "Your duty, O rājā," said Uttaṅka,
"is to protect your subjects.
Follow it. Let our worries dissipate
through your grace.

12 Protected by a mahātmā like you,
O rājā, the earth will be rid of all sorrows.
Do not retire
to the forest.

13 The dharma of protecting your subjects
can never be equalled
by accumulating merit in forest-living.
Give up the idea.

14 O Indra-among-rājās!
There is no dharma to equal the dharma
of protecting one's subjects,
as the ancient rājā-ṛṣis will testify.

15 A rājā should always
look after his subjects;
you owe it to them.
I cannot peacefully perform my tapasyā.

16 Near my ashram is a wilderness,
an ocean of sand,
called Ujjālaka –
a vast, level, waterless tract.

17 It is many *yojanas* long
and many *yojanas* broad.
In it lives a mahā-valiant
fierce Dānava anti-god.

18 His name is Dhundhu,
he is the son of Madhu and Kaiṭabha.
This terrible anti-god, O rājā,
lives underground.

19 Mahārāja, kill him
and then retire to the forest.
He is at present engaged in tapasyā
to destroy the worlds

20 And the gods. The situation is such
that he cannot
be killed by the gods, the Daityas,
the rākṣasas,

21 The nāgas, the yakṣas, and the gandharvas
because, O rājā,
he has obtained a boon
from the Pitāmaha of the worlds, Brahmā.

22 Kill him, and prosper!
Do not deviate from this.
By killing him you will achieve
undying fame.

23 The anti-god
likes buried in sand,
and once a year he stirs
and begins to breathe;

24 Then the whole earth,
and her mountains and forests tremble.
His breath billows
into sun-blotting mahā-sandstorms.

25 For seven days the earth shakes,
and smoke and flames obscure the land.
This upheaval
goes on continuously.

26 That is why, O Indra-among-rājās,
I am unable to have peace in my āshramā.
Kill him
for the world's good.

27 Peace will be restored
when this anti-god is killed.
I am convinced you have the power
to kill him.

28 Your energy will be augmented
by the grace of Viṣṇu.
A boon was granted by Viṣṇu
in the distant past, O lord of the earth,

29 That the man who kills this fierce
and powerful anti-god
will be charged with the strength
of Viṣṇu himself.

30 O Indra-among-rājās,
accept the hard-to-defeat strength
which none others can have,
and destroy the anti-god.

31 The mahā-energetic Dhundhu
cannot be killed by any other man,
though that man try
for a hundred years."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THREE

1 O excellent Kaurava! The rājā-ṛṣi heard Uttaṅka
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya),
and did *añjali* to the Brahmin,
and replied:

2 "Brahmin, your visit here
will not be fruitless.
Bhagavan, revered one, my son here,
who is named Kuvalāśva,

3 Is firm-willed and energetic;
his prowess is unmatched.
He will do whatever
is most pleasing to you,

4 With the help of his brave sons
whose arms are like *parigha*-iron maces.
Brahmin, I have given up arms;
let me leave."

5 When the radiantly powerful muni
heard these words,
he said: "So be it."
The king placed his son

6 In the command of mahātmā Uttaṅka,
and went to the forest.
Yudhiṣṭhira asked, "*Bhagavan,* revered one,
who was this anti-god?

7 Whose son was he? Whose grandson?
I want to know this.
O tapasyā-rich one, I have never heard
of such a mahā-terrible Daitya antigod.

8 O mahā-wise rich-in-tapasyā ṛṣi,
bhagavan, revered one,
enlighten me on all particulars
about this anti-god."

9 O rājā! Mahā-wise one (said Mārkaṇḍeya),
listen to me
while I supply you the exact details
about this anti-god.

10 O bull-brave Bharata, when the world
became one vast ocean,
and all moving and unmoving creatures
perished,

11 The Source and Creator of the universe,
eternal and undecaying Viṣṇu,
adored by munis and Siddhas
as the lord of the worlds,

12 That magnificently holy Bhagavān
lay in yoga-sleep
under the widespread hood of infinitely
powerful Śesa-Nāga.

13 The Creator of the universe,
Mahā-auspicious, Bhagavān,
Undecaying Hari
Lay under the hood
Of the world-encircling cosmic serpent.

14 He lay asleep –
And from his navel there sprouted
A lotus! –
A lotus shining and level as the sun.
From this sun-like lotus
Sprang Pitāmaha

15 Brahmā – Lotus-born –
Guru of the worlds – shining and lovely as the sun –
Who is the four Vedas,
Who has four arms and four faces –

16 Who has mahā-strength
And irresistible infinite prowess.
It so happened
That the two powerful Danava-anti-gods,

17 Madhu and Kaiṭabha saw
refulgent Hari
reclining under the hood
of the Eternal Serpent,

18 On a divine bed that stretched
for my *yojanas*;
on his neck was the Kaustubha,
his head wore a crown,
he was dressed
in ochre silk.

19 O rājā! He shone in his own dazzling resplendence,
which blazed
like a thousand controlled
sun-explosions.

20 Madhu and Kaiṭabha were awe-struck
by the dazzling darshan
of lotus-eyed Brahmā Pitāmaha
seated on the lotus.

21 The two anti-gods began harassing
Brahmā Pitāmaha.
Mahā-illustrious Brahmā, disturbed,
began to shake on his lotus.

22 As he shook,
the stalk of the lotus vibrated –
and Keśava-Viṣṇu awoke
and saw the prowess-rich Dānava anti-gods.

23 The Deity said to them:
"Welcome, O mahā-powerful heroes.
You have pleased me.
Ask any three excellent boons."

24 Those proud and powerful anti-gods,
O mahārāja,
laughed and said
to Madhu-slaying Hṛṣīkeśa-Viṣṇu:

25 “God! Greatest of the gods!
Ask *us* a boon.
We are in a mood to grant
some properly-asked for boons.”

26 “I will ask one,” the Deity said.
“One boon I want.
Both of you are great;
there is none like you.

27 Heroes of unrivalled strength!
Grant that I kill you.
This is what I wish
for the world’s good.”

28 Madhu and Kaiṭabha replied:
“Puruṣottama-Viṣṇu,
we do not even jokingly lie;
we cherish Dharma and Truth.

29 No one is our equal in strength,
in good looks, bravery,
tapasyā, charity, self-control, manners,
and in dharma.

30 But a great danger hangs over us.
O Keśava-Viṣṇu,
carry out your words,
for who can overcome Kāla?

31 Lord, God of the gods,
we would like one condition observed:
You must kill us at a place
that is totally uncovered.

32 Lovely-eyed Lord, God of the gods,
treat us like your sons.
This is the one boon
we would like from you.

33 Do not take back the promise
you held out to us.”
The Deity said, “So be it.
What you wish, will be.”

34 Govinda-Viṣṇu pondered,
but could not think of an uncovered place
in heaven or on earth.
Then Madhusūdana-Viṣṇu

35 Saw that his thighs
were completely uncovered;
so the mahā-illustrious Deity used
his sharp *cakra*,
and with it cut off the heads
of Madhu and Kaiṭabha.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FOUR

1 Mahārāja! Madhu and Kaiṭabha
had a son, Dhundhu,
of mahā-strength and energy,
of mahā-valour.

2 He stood on one leg
until he became skeleton-thin.
Pleased, Brahmā granted him a boon;
he asked:

3 "Make me incapable of being killed
by gods, Dānava anti-gods,
yakṣas, serpents, rākṣasas
and gandharvas."

4 Brahmā Pitamāha said,
"It will be so; you may go."
He lowered his head at Brahmā's feet,
and left.

5 The mahā-brave and energetic Dhundhu,
armed with this boon,
hurried to Viṣṇu,
thinking of his father's murder.

6 First he vanquished the gods and gandharvas;
then
he began brutalities
against other Viṣṇu-led deities.

7 O bull-brave Bharata,
that ill-minded anti-god
came to an ocean of sand,
a region called Ujjālaka.

8 From his subterranean hide-out,
O shining one,
he started his depredations
against Uttaṅka's āshram.

9 Dhundhu, mighty son of Madhu
and Kaiṭabha,
practised rigorous tapasyā there
to destroy the worlds.

10 Every time he breathed,
a shower of sparks fell
on the āshram of Uttaṅka.
With his army,

11 O bull-brave Bharata, at this time
rājā Kuvalāśva left for that region;
with him were Brahmins,
Uttaṅka, and his sons.

12 The foe-vanquishing ruler of men,
Kuvalāśva,
was accompanied
by twentyone thousand powerful sons.

13 On request from Uttaṅka,
omnipotent Lord Viṣṇu charged him with energy
for the welfare
of the three worlds.

14 When the invincible king left,
a loud sky-voice proclaimed:
This unconquerable hero
will be Dhundhu's killer, Dhundhu-māra.

15 Divine flowers showered on him,
and a large number
of divine kettledrums
began a spontaneous celebration.

16 As the intelligent king proceeded,
cool breezes blew.
Lord-of-the-gods Indra sent showers
to remove dust from the earth.

17 Yudhiṣṭhira ! The chariots of gods
could be seen in the sky
at the point where Dhundhu lay
in hiding below.

18 The curious gods and gandharvas
and mahā-ṛṣis
watched from heaven the duel
between Dhundhu and Kuvalāśva.

19 O descendant of the Kurus,
the king, armed with the energy of Nārāyaṇa,
searched everywhere
with his sons.

20 He came to the ocean of sand
and dug it up;
and the sons of Kuvalāśva
kept digging;

21 They stumbled on Dhundhu
after seven days.
The ferocious anti-god lay there,
a massive lump,

22 Radiant like the sun, his body all aflame.
Mahārāja,
his sleeping body covered
the whole western horizon.

23 O lion-like rājā!
He looked like an all-destroying Kāla conflagration.
The sons of Kuvalāśva surrounded him
on all sides,

24 And attacked mercilessly
with sharp arrows, maces, clubs,
axes, iron spikes, spears,
and bright, glittering swords.

25 Wounded, he stirred angrily.
Mahā-powerful,
he seemed to gulp down all the weapons
hurled at him.

26 His mouth vomited fire
like the *saṁvartaka*-flames of yuga-end;
he charred the sons
of the king.

27 O lion-like rājā! Just as lord Kapila in the past
consumed the sons of Sagara;
the fire-mouthed anti-god
seemed to be

28 An incandescent repetition of Kapila.
All the sons of the king
were consumed
in the wrath of Dhundhu;

29 And mahā-energetic Kuvalāśva approached
the mahātmā anti-god,
now fully awake,
like a second Kumbhakarṇa.

30 Maharāja! Spurts of water flowed down
rājā Kuvalāśva's body,
extinguishing the flames
emitted by the anti-god.

31 Charged with yoga-power,
he extinguished the flames;
then he attacked
with the Brahmā-weapon,

32 To benefit the three worlds.
The anti-god foe of the gods
was routed by the prowess
of rāja-ṛṣi Kuvalāśva

33 Who became like a second lord
of the three worlds.
Because he killed the anti-god Dhundhu,
he became

34 Dhundhumāra, "Slayer of Dhundhu",
and all the gods and ṛṣis
were delighted
with his remarkable feat.

35 They pressed him to ask a boon.
O rājā! He did *añjali* before them
and, pleased,
he said to them:

36 "Grant that I always give wealth
to excellent Brahmins,
that I be invincible to my enemies,
that I have the friendship of Viṣṇu
that I harbour
no malice,

37 That I always pursue dharma,
that I find repose in heaven."
The gods, pleased,
said, "So be it."

38 The ṛṣis, gandharvas and wise Uttaṅka
were pleased also
and they showered blessings
on the king.

39 The gods and the mahā-ṛṣis
then departed.
Three sons of Kuvalāśva survived,
O Yudhiṣṭhira.

40 Their names were Dṛḍhāśva,
Kuvalāśva and Candrāśva.
They continued
the illustrious Ikṣvāku

41 Dynasty of kings.
This is the story,
O excellent Yudhiṣṭhira,
of how the mighty Kuvalāśva killed

42 The anti-god Dhundhu,
the son of Madhu and Kaiṭabha,
and came to be known
as Dhundhumāra.

43 That new name made him
the possessor of many virtues.
I have told you the details
you wanted to know.

44 Kuvalāśva's feat has made the story
of Dhundhu's death famous,
for it is dependent
on Viṣṇu's glory.

45 The man who listens to it
becomes a dharmātmā,
and also a father;
listening to it on sacred days,
brings longevity and good fortune.
He is freed from all diseases,
and is never beset
with irritations.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIVE

1 Then, O finest of Bharatas (said Vaiśampāyana),
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira asked
mahā-radiant Mārkaṇḍeya a dharma-fraught question
difficult to grasp.

2 *"Bhagavan,* revered one,
I wish to hear from you
about female greatness.
Brahmin, tell me its subtle dharma.

3 O best among men,
the sun, moon, earth, and fire
appear to us like embodiments
of divine glory.

4 Excellent descendant of the Bhṛgus,
father, mother, guru –
these and others, as ordained by the gods,
also seem divine.

5 All elders deserve respect,
as does a woman
faithful to one husband.
Wifely fidelity seems most difficult.

6 Tell me about the greatness of faithful wives,
O defectless one,
who, restraining their desires
and even their thoughts,

7 Deify their husbands. Revered one, lord,
their single-minded,
selfless dedication appears to me
to be most difficult.

8 The respect offered by sons
to their fathers and mothers,
or by wives to husbands,
is indeed most difficult, O Brahmin.
I do not know anything more difficult
than a wife's dharma.

9 Brahmin, what perfect-mannered wives
do for their husbands,
what sons do for parents,
is almost impossibly difficult.

10 Women who remain faithful to one husband;
women who speak the truth;
women who are pregnant
for full ten months;

11 Women who at the time of delivery
endure such physical pain –
what can be
more wonderful than this?

12 Women give birth to children
after painful labour –
and then, O bull-brave Brahmin,
they lavish love and care on their children.

13 That human beings who think harm of others
and often are malicious
can also be so duty-conscious,
is indeed remarkable.

14 Tell me all about Kṣatriya dharma.
O Brahmin! To pursue dharma
is difficult for the ambitious
because they have to be ruthless.

15 Best of the Bhṛgus, you who know
all the answers, revered one,
answer me these,
and I will always pay you homage."

16 Mārkaṇḍeya replied: "Excellent Bharata,
your question is difficult,
it involves an entire background;
but listen to me.

17 Some think the mother is superior,
others the father.
The mother's role is more difficult:
she procreates life.

18 Fathers, by pūjā to gods, by severe tapasyā,
holy chanting,
enduring heat and cold, and other means,
desire offspring.

19 After these rigorous means, when a child is born,
O heroic Yudhiṣṭhira,
they always think of the best future
for the child.

20 O Bharata descendant, both mother and father
desire that the son
should have integrity, fame, wealth,
children and dharma.

21 The son who fulfils these hopes of his parents,
O Indra-among-rājās, honours dharma.
The son whose mother
and father are pleased

22 Finds fame and dharma in this world and the next.
No yajña is needed,
no *śrāddha* is required,
no fasting expected

23 Of a wife who has faithfully
cherished her husband;
she gets heaven effortlessly.
Such is the dharma of devoted wives.
Listen carefully, Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
And remember it in every detail."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIX

1 There was a famous Brahmin named Kauśika
(said Mārkaṇḍeya),
Veda-learned,
full of dharma, rich in tapasyā

2 He finished his study of the Vedas and Vedāṅgas
and Upaniṣads.
One day he was chanting the Vedas
under a tree;

3 A she-crane who was perched
on the tree-top
dropped her dung on the head
of the pious Brahmin.

4 The twice-born one, infuriated,
thought of harming her;
as he glared angrily
in her direction,

5 She fell on the ground,
injured by his wrath.
The Brahmin, seeing her senseless
on the ground,

6 Was overcome by compassion
and began lamenting,
"I have done wrong by giving in
to wild anger."

7 He kept repeating these words
until he came to a village;
begging for alms in every house.
O bull-brave Bharata,

8 He arrived to a familiar place
and shouted, "Alms!"
A woman answered him,
saying, "Wait."

9 When the lady of the house
was cleaning the bowl
before giving alms, O rājā,
oppressed with great hunger

10 Her husband suddenly entered the house.
The good housewife,
distracted, neglected
the waiting Brahmin,

11 And gave her husband water
to wash his feet
and rinse his mouth; also a seat.
Sweet victuals

12 Were served by the black-eyed lady
to her husband,
and she waited at his side,
to minister to his need.
That devoted lady always
ate the remnants.

13 She gratified her husband's least wishes;
she deified him,
in action, in speech,
and in thought.

14 Her thoughts were focused on her husband
and how to serve him.
She was virtuous, gentle,
considerate to relatives.

15 She always desired the welfare
of her husband.
She daily worshipped the gods,
attended to guests,
to her mother-in-law and father-in-law,
and to servants.

16 She kept her passions
under the strictest check.
As she was attending to the needs
of her husband,
the lovely-eyed lady suddenly remembered
the waiting Brahmin.

17 She was ashamed. O excellent Bharata,
she quickly left the room
in order to give alms
to the Brahmin.

18 "Lovely limbed lady," said the Brahmin,
"I am astonished.
Why did you ask me to wait?
Why not let me go?"

19 Seeing the Brahmin agitated and blazing in glory,
O Indra-among-men,
the good lady said to him
very sweetly:

20 "Learned one, forgive me.
My husband is like a god to me.
He was hungry and tired,
so I attended to him."

21 The Brahmin retorted:
"You do not think Brahmins superior!
Your husband is superior!
Your household dharma insults Brahmins!

22 Even Indra *praṇāmas* Brahmins –
why shouldn't mortals?
Proud woman, you do not know,
you may not have heard from old men

23 That Brahmins are like fire –
they can burn the earth!"
She replied, "O rich-in-tapasyā Brahmin!
Do not think I am a she-crane.

24 What will your anger do? –
Burn me as you did the she-crane?
I do not disrespect Brahmins;
they are like gods.

25 But you must forgive my fault,
O faultless one.
I know the energy of Brahmins,
I know intelligent men are mahā-fortune-favoured.

26 Once their anger made the ocean water
saline and undrinkable.
I have heard of munis of disciplined lives,
radiant with tapasyā.

27 The fire of their anger has not to this day
been extinguished
in the Daṇḍaka-forest. Because he insulted Brahmins,
ill-ātmaned Vātāpi,

28 The truly wicked-ātmaned mahā-anti-god,
was swallowed and digested by Agastya.
We have heard
of the superiority of mahātmā Brahmins.

29 Mahātmā Brahmins may get angry,
but they forgive also, easily.
So you should forgive this little fault,
O faultless Brahmin.

30 I cherish the dharma that accrues
from serving my husband.
I consider my husband
the chief god.

31 I have a single dharma –
to serve my husband.
O best of Brahmins, you can see
what results from such service.

32 I know that your anger consumed the she-crane;
but, O excellent Brahmin,
anger is one's own enemy
that lurks in one's own body.

33 The gods consider him a Brahmin
who sheds anger and ignorance,
speaks the truth,
and honours a guru.

34 The gods consider him a Brahmin
who, harmed himself,
will harm injure others; who is self-controlled,
and devoted to dharma.

35 The gods consider him a Brahmin
who controls desire and anger,
who cherishes dharma himself
and treats others who cherish dharma as equals.

36 The gods consider him a Brahmin
who praises all dharmas,
who studies and teaches,
performs and officiates at yajñas.

37 The gods consider him a bull-brave Brahmin
who gives to others in proportion to his means,
who is a brahmacārī,
who is liberal and scholarly.

38 The gods consider him a Brahmin
who is diligent in studies,
and does to Brahmins
what they find agreeable.

39 Those who speak the truth
never find untruth pleasant.
Simplicity, self-control and learning
are a Brahmin's dharma.

40 Those who know dharma
consider simplicity, truth,
and self-control
to be the highest dharma.

41 Dharma is eternal and difficult to grasp;
the elders say it is based on Truth,
Dharma is based
on the wisdom of *śruti.*

42 Dharma is varied and subtle.
O great Brahmin,
you are holy, learned in Dharma
and the Vedas.

43 But I do not think you know
the essence of Dharma, O revered one.
O excellent Brahmin, since you do not know
the highest Dharma,

44 Go to the city of Mithilā,
and ask
the dharma-knowing hunter there,
who honours his father and mother,
who is truthful,
and has disciplined his passions.

45 O excellent Brahmin,
he lives in the city of Mithilā.
He will explain Dharma to you.
Go to him. May all go well.

46 If I have spoken too much,
please forgive me, O blameless one.
Those who really know Dharma
never find fault with a woman."

47 The Brahmin said, "Lovely lady,
I am pleased with you.
My anger is gone.
Your rebukes have inspired me, lovely lady.
Svasti té-astu! I will go and do
what is good for me.

48 May you be blessed,
for you have such noble thoughts."
Kauśika, best of the twice-born,
sent away by her,
left her house and, chiding himself,
returned to his house.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVEN

1 He kept revolving her remarkable words
in his mind,
and reproaching himself,
as if he were a criminal.

2 He thought how subtle sva-dharma was,
and reflected:
If I really respect her words,
I should go to Mithilā,

3 *And meet the self-controlled,*
dharma-knowing hunter there.
I will go today to that man of rich tapasyā
and ask about dharma.

4 His faith in her was strengthened
by her knowledge
of the she-crane incident,
and her sweet discourse on dharma,

5 And he was brimming with curiosity;
so he crossed forests,
villages and cities,
and came to Mithilā,

6 Ruled by king Janaka.
A city demarcated by dharma;
the lovely city pulsed
with yajñas and festivals.

7 He saw splendid porches and massive palaces,
protected on all sides by high walls;
he noticed
innumerable chariots.

8 Several broad shop-lined roads
ran through the city;
on them streamed horses, soldiers, chariots,
and elephants.

9 The Brahmin saw
happy and healthy citizens,
busy with various festivities
and other activities.

10 He began enquiring about the dharma-knowing hunter.
Some Brahmins guided him;
he saw the hunter
sitting in a butcher's yard.

11 So he waited in one corner;
because the tapasyā-rich hunter
was selling vension
and buffalo-meat,
and a crowd of eager customers
had circled him.

12 Intuitively guessing that the Brahmin
had come to meet him,
the hunter stood up
and approached the visitor.

13 "Excellent Brahmin," said the hunter,
"you are welcome, revered one.
I am the hunter.
What can I do for you?

14 The words of the woman to you –
Go to Mithilā – I know about them.
I also know
why you have come here."

15 The Brahmin was astounded
by these words
and he kept thinking to himself:
A second marvel!

16 The hunter said to the Brahmin: "Revered one!
Where you are staying now
is not the right place for you.
Come to my house, O faultless one."

17 The Brahmin, very pleased, said,
"Whatever you say."
With the Brahmin leading,
the respectful hunter went to his house.

18 He offered the Brahmin a seat
in his handsome house.
Accepting the *arghya*-water,
the excellent Brahmin

19 Relaxed, and said to the hunter; "My child, *tāta,*
you don't seem suited to your profession.
I am sorry
you have such a horrible job."

20 "It runs in the family," the hunter replied.
"My father and grandfather
were hunters.
Brahmin, why should you feel sorry
if I follow the dharma
of my family?

21 The Creator assigned me to this.
I am scrupulous in my trade.
I look after
my aging father and mother.

22 I do not envy others;
I speak the truth, always; as best I can,
I give in charity; and eat after feeding gods,
guests and servants.

23 I do not speak ill of anyone,
nor hate anyone, however superior.
Excellent Brahmin,
past karma is inescapable.

24 Agriculture, cow-rearing, trade, and law
are the main professions in this world.
For the next world,
what helps is knowledge of the Vedas.

25 The Sūdra's duty is to serve;
the Vaiśya's, agriculture;
the Ksatriya's, military skill;
the Brahmin's truth-speaking,
tapasyā, chanting mantras,
and brahmacarya.

26 The rājā rules, according to dharma,
his subjects
who follow their professions;
he reinstates the undeservingly dismissed.

27 Because he is the lord,
the rājā should be feared.
The king should check profession-shifters,
as arrows check deer.

28 O excellent Brahmin,
there is none in Janaka's kingdom
who has departed from his profession
in any of the four castes.

29 Janaka is a rājā who will punish his own son,
should that son commit a crime.
He never punishes
a man of dharma.

30 With information from his spies,
he keeps an eye on everyone's dharma.
Prosperity, kingdom, and punishment
are in Kṣatriya hands.

31 Rājās, pursuing their own dharma,
seek prosperity.
Rājās are the protectors
of all the four castes.

32 I do not hunt hogs and buffaloes myself,
O Brahmin ṛṣi.
They are killed by others;
I only sell their meat later.

33 I do not eat meat.
I have intercourse with my wife
after her period.
I fast in the day, and eat at night.

34 A person may be low-born
and yet good-charactered;
he may cherish dharma
though his job is to butcher animals.

35 Dharma declines when kings misbehave;
then adharma takes over,
and their subjects begin
to decay.

36 Dwarfs and hunchbacks,
deafs and mutes and impotents,
wide-skulled and staring-eyed monsters
then take birth.

37 When rulers are delinquent,
their subjects suffer.
But Janaka is a rājā
who rules with dharma.

38 He is kind to his subjects,
who adhere to their sva-dharma.
As for myself, those who praise
and those who criticise me –

39 I satisfy them both with a job well done.
Kings who strictly perform
their sva-dharma
and are always active,

40 Who can bear adversity,
are prompt and efficient, –
they never need outside help.
Food-distribution, patience, dharma-firmness,

41 Pūjā-respect for all who deserve it –
these virtues
are found only in the world renouncers,
and in none else.

42 Never speak a lie.
Do good without being asked to do so.
Never abandon dharma
for the sake of lust, anger, or envy.

43 Never be ecstatic in good fortune,
or depressed by adversity.
Never let adversity
take you away from dharma.

44 If you do wrong,
take care not to repeat it.
Commit your ātman to work
for the happiness of others.

45 Don't return evil with evil.
Prefer goodness, always.
The evil-bent person destroys himself
by his own evil.

46 Criminal action only increases dishonesty
and wickedness.
Those who think there is no dharma,
those who laugh at goodness –

47 They have no faith in dharma,
they ruin themselves.
The evil-filled man gets bloated
like a wind-puffed bag.

48 The best men are always
the most kind and gentle.
The pompous and worldly
are the most ignorable.
The sun shows the day;
their ātman shows their hollowness.

49 Only a fool seeks shining fame
by praising himself.
The unknown learned man shines
in his own glory.

50 He never praises himself;
he never runs down others.
No man exists
who has all the world's virtues.

51 The repentant criminal is cleansed
of his misdeeds by penance.
Refusal to do wrong again is the first step
to stop being criminal.

52 O finest of Brahmins,
such karma can cleanse a criminal.
This, Brahmin, is advised by *śruti*
which is the root of dharma.

53 A person of dharma
doing wrong unknowingly
can be freed of his misdeeds.
For dharma is such
that it excuses misdeeds
committed by mistake.

54 The man who does wrong and proclaims
'I have done no wrong', is no man;
the gods know it,
his inner self knows it.

55 Give up seeing others' faults;
see the good they do.
The good man who overlooks
others' defects
as he would stains in his dress,
will find happiness.

56 If after doing wrong a man engages in noble work,
he is freed of wrong,
like a moon emerging
bright from behind clouds.

57 Just as the rising sun shines
after scattering darkness,
a man, freed of misdeeds,
shines through noble work.

58 O excellent Brahmin,
greed is the root of all evil.
Men without knowledge, driven by greed,
commit evil deeds.

59 Like weeds covering wells,
adharma often poses as dharma.
Self-control, piety, professions of dharma –
evil-doers have all these –
what they lack
is strength of character."

60 The mahā-wise Brahmin asked
the dharma-knowing hunter:
"O finest of men,
how can I make out strength of character?

61 O most blessed of dharma-knowing meat-sellers!
I want to know this from you.
O mahā-inspiring one,
tell me everything."

62 "Excellent Brahmin," said the meat-seller,
"yajña, gift, tapasyā,
study of the Vedas, truth –
these five purities constitute character.

63 Control of lust, anger, pride,
greed, and ill-thought
leads to love of dharma.
Character depends on this.

64 When yajña-performers and Veda-scholars
forget themselves
and follow the example set by good people, –
this is the second sign of character.

65 O Brahmin, service to gurus, charity,
truth-speaking, and angerlessness –
these four are present
in character.

66 A man can aim at strength of character,
but achieving it
depends on diligent practice –
otherwise, impossible.

67 The Upaniṣad of Vedas:
Truth
The Upaniṣad of Truth:
Self-control.
The Upaniṣad of self-control:
Renunciation.
These are the qualities of
Character.

68 Those who are deceived by their own cleverness
into hating dharma
tread the wrong path.
Their followers are doomed to suffer.

69 Those who keep their vows,
follow *śruti,* are frugal,
travel the path of dharma,
observe the dharma of truth;

70 Those who are well-behaved,
who follow the advice
of their teachers –
get the highest dharma and artha.

71 Disregard the negative thinkers, who are cruel,
bent on evil, and mischievous;
instead, take shelter in knowledge,
serve men of dharma.

72 Body : the river.
Waters : the five senses.
Desires : the sharks.
Births : the whirlpools.
Patience : the boat.
Goal : to cross the river.

73 Colour dyes stain the purity
of a pure-white garment;
So, mahā-dharma, intelligence, yoga shine best
only in men of character.

74 Ahiṁsā and Truth are beneficial
to all life.
Ahiṁsā is the prime Dharma,
its root is Truth.
All our activities find their fruition
in Truth.

75 The man of character sees truth
as the only strength.
The dharma of good men is character,
revealed in quality of conduct.

76 Every person rationalises
according to his nature.
The evie-bent man is the slave
of lust and anger.

77 Juistice is Dharma – is an incontestable truth;
what goes against justice
is adharma.
Man of character believe this.

78 Those who have character
never show anger, pride,
arrogance, and envy;
their conduct is simple and serene.

79 They follow the three Vedas,
they are pure and restrained,
they honour their supeiors,
they have character.

80 Their actions and conduct
are hard to emulate.
Their karma of pure action
cancels all their defects.

81 Character is timeless, wonderful,
and indescribable.
The wise who with dharma see Dharma
obtain a vision of heaven.

82 Theists, who are free from self-importance,
who show-pūjā respect
to the twice-born and saintly men,
also go to heaven.

83 This is primary Dharma:
First, the Vedas,
Second, the Dharma-śāstras,
Third, Character.
Study of all forms of knowledge,
Bathing in various *tīrthas*,

84 Forbearance, patience, truth, purity
are signs of character.
Those who have compassion for creatures,
and practise ahiṁsā,

85 Who do not speak ill of anybody,
who are loved by the twice-born,
and are familiar with the fruits
of good and bad karma,

86 Are said to have character
by those who have character.
Those who are just and full of virtues,
who seek everyone's good,

87 And are honest, obtain heaven.
Those who walk the good path,
who are liberal and selfless,
who aid the sorrowing,

88 Are pūjā-respected by those whose wealth is knowledge,
who practise tapasyā –
they are said to have character
by those who have character.

89 Those who are charitable get prosperity
in this world
and happiness in the next.
Good men, solicited by the wise,

90 Give alms generously, even to the extent
of denying
their wives and servants.
Looking to dharma and welfare,

91 Those who behave in this manner
get eternal peace.
The truthful, modest and simple,
the practisers of ahiṁsā,

92 The unpassionate and unproud,
the gentle and self-sacrificing,
the self-controlled, patient,
intelligent, compassionate,

93 The ones free from kāma and envy,
are the world's witnesses.
These three are considered
the highest ideals:

94 First, not to hate anyone;
second, to be charitable;
third, to be truthful. Those who have compassion
are the truly saintly.

95 This is the dharma of all
who have character,
who have decided to be firm
in the practise of goodness.

96 Not envying others, forbearance, patience, peace,
contentment, sweet speech, the food,
renunciation of kāma and anger,
service of good men,

97 Actions based on *śruti* –
these are the signs of character.
Those who follow dharma
and those who follow men of character

98 Attain the palace of wisdom,
and are free from the worst fear.
Only they can wisely observe and analyse
the merits and defects of human nature.

99 O bull-brave Brahmin, I have told you all
about character and knowledge,
such as I know
and such as I have heard."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHT

1 O Yudhiṣṭhira! The dharma-rich meat-seller
said to the Brahmin
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya),
"My profession is truly a gory one.

2 Fate is strong, O Brahmin,
and karma is inescapable;
it consists of suffering for evil deeds
done in a previous life.

3 Brahmin, I wish to remove this suffering.
Fate is the advance killer –
the executioner
is only an agent.

4 And we are only agents as a result
of our karma.
O twice-born one, for animals to get slaughtered,
and their meat sold, –

5 That is also dharma – because the gods,
guests and servants relish
and the *pitṛs* are offered pūjā
with this delicious food.

6 The *śrutis* say that herbs, vegetables,
deer, birds and wild animals
are the ordained food
of all creatures.

7 Uśīnara's son Śibi,
a king of great fortitude,
obtained difficult-to-obtain heaven
by sacrificing his flesh.

8 O Brahmin, in the distant past,
two thousand animals
were killed daily to supply the kitchen
of king Rantideva.

9 He also ordered two thousand cows
slaughtered daily.
Rantideva daily distributed food
mixed with meat.

10 O excellent Brahmin,
that king obtained enermous fame.
For the four-monthly rituals,
animals have to be killed.

11 *Śruti* tells us that Agni is fond
of animal food.
In yajñas animals are always killed
by Brahmins after

12 Sanctification by mantras,
and these Brahmins go to heaven.
Had Agni not been fond of flesh-food
in the past,

13 How could meat have become the food of others?
Brahmin,
the following condition regarding meat-eating
is laid down by ṛṣis:

14 ‘Whoever eats meat after first offering it
to the gods
and the *pitṛs* does not incur guilt
by eating it.’

15 Such a man is not supposed
to have eaten meat,
just as a brahmacārī who indulges in intercourse
with his wife
during her period,
remains a good Brahmin.

16 This rule was established after due thought
of its goods and ills.
King Saudāsa,
under the influence of a curse,
ate human flesh.
What do you say to that?

17 I know this is my sva-dharma,
so I follow it, O excellent Brahmin.
This is my karma:
I earn my livelihood by it.

18 Brahmin, to abandon one’s sva-karma
is to do adharma.
To stay within one’s sva-karma
is definitely dharma.

19 One’s previous karma never leaves
a person.
The Creator knew this when determining
karma-consequences.

20 A man caught in bad karma
should always think:
‘How will I expiate my karma,
and escape ruination?’

21 Bad karma can be expiated –
by giving gifts,
by speaking the truth,
by serving one’s guru,

22 By pūjā-respect for the twice-born,
by following dharma,
by giving up *abhīmān*-pride and gossip.
I do all these.

23 Agriculture is an honoured profession,
but farmers harm animals;
when land is ploughed,
innocent life is killed.

24 Tell me, Brahmin, what do *you* think?
Vrihī-rice
and other so-called seeds are said
to have life.

25 Men hunt wild animals,
kill them and eat them;
they also cut down trees and plants,
Brahmin.

26 There are living organisms
in plants and trees,
and also in water.
What do *you* think, Brahmin?

27 The whole world teems
with a multiplicity of life:
fish prey on fish, and so on.
What do *you* think, Brahmin?

28 Life feeds on life,
all manner of creatures, do they not,
devour other creatures,
some even prey on their own species.

29 Even as he walks, a man stamps
insects and worms to death.
Sleeping or resting,
he unknowingly
kills many forms of life.
What do *you* think?

30 The earth and *ākāsa*-space are filled
with subtle forms of life
which men unknowingly kill.
What do *you* think?

31

Those who made the law ‘Do not kill’
and proclaimed ahiṁsā in the past,
must have been
very confused people.

32

How is it possible to live
and not kill?
I have thought deeply,
and I know at last
that there is no man living
who has not in some way killed.

33

Even the ascetics who vow ahiṁsā
are guilty.
Because they take great care,
they kill less.

34

Noble men of mahā-guṇas
do brazenly criminal acts,
and are not even ashamed
of them.

35

Friends do not like to see
their friends prospering;
and enemies do not like to see
their enemies prospering.

36

Relatives fail to please relatives
in spite of trying hard.
Self-appointed paṇḍits are always finding fault
with their gurus.

37

Such is the topsy-turvy nature of the world.
O excellent Brahmin,
what do *you* think of this tangle
of dharma and adharma?

38

Much can be said, on both sides,
on dharma and adharma.
Who follows his sva-karma
gets mahā-fame.”

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINE

1 O learned-in-all-dharmas Yudhiṣṭhira!
That dharma-rich meat-seller said,
in skilful speech, to the excellent Brahmin
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya):

2 "The old accept the conclusion
of *śruti*
that the ways of dharma are subtle,
infinite, many-branching.

3 When life is at stake,
and in the matter of marriage,
untruth is permissible.
Then an untruth becomes truth,
and truth
becomes untruth.

4 Look how complicated dharma is! –
It is often manipulated
because the greatest good of all
is held out to be the truth.

5 There is no doubt, O excellent one,
that a man
must reap the fruits
of his good and bad deeds.

6 The ignorant man, in total abjection,
blasphemes against the gods,
not knowing his bad karma
impels him to do so.

7 O finest of Brahmins,
foolish and calculating and vacillating men
attain the opposite of happiness –
which is misery.

8 Neither intelligence, nor good conduct,
nor hard efforts
can then save them.
If results depended on nothing else,

9 Men would have succeeded simply
by struggling hard all the time.
Capable, intelligent,
and hardworking men

10 Have been frustrated in their efforts,
and have failed to attain
the fruits of their diligent hopes.
Others, who harm people,

11 And are adept tricksters,
find joy and prosperity.
Many succeed without making
the least effort.

12 Others keep trying again and again,
and fail to get what they deserve.
Misers worship gods
to get sons;

13 After ten months in the womb,
a son is born,
a disgrace to the family!
Others live off inherited wealth.

14 The diseases that afflict men
are the results of karma.
Men then become like deer
trapped by hunters.

15 All kinds of mental ailments
harass them.
Just as hunters chase deer,
doctors prescribe various drugs

16 To chase away their patients' illnesses.
Those who are fond of good food,
become victims
of bowel disorders.

17 O all-dharma-knowing Kauśika,
what they want to enjoy, they cannot enjoy!
Those who have great body-strength
suffer the most;

18 They are so enfeebled that they find
it difficult
even to earn their livelihood.
If one were completely free,

19 No one would die, no one would be subject
to decay or doom;
all would attain
their hearts' desires.

20 Everyone is competing with his neighbour,
trying to excel him,
trying very hard.
The result – the neighbour wins.

21 Many are born under the same star
and the same auspicious conditions,
but differ totally
in their activities.

22 No one, O excellent Brahmin,
can completely be his own master,
One's past karma affects
one's present life.

23 *Śruti* declares that the individual self is eternal,
O Brahmin,
and the physical body
is what gets destroyed.

24 At the time of death,
the body is destroyed,
but the karma-fettered self
enters another body."

25 The Brahmin asked, "Excellent one,
O finest of all knowers of dharma,
tell me, how does the *jīva*-self
become eternal?"

26 The meat-seller replied:
"The self does not perish,
it changes its abode.
Creatures do not die.
The self shifting elsewhere,
this is called death.

27 You cannot reap the fruits
of another man's karma,
you reap only your own.
The consequences of karma
cannot be escaped.
Such is this world.

28 Those who are virtuous
develop in virtue;
evil-doers become worse.
Their karma pursues them;
under pressure of karma,
they are born again."

29 The Brahmin asked:
"How does the self enter another womb,
how is it attached
to good and evil?
How does it get born
in a good or evil womb?"

30 The meat-seller replied:
"Here is a brief explanation of the mystery
of karma's connection with conception,
O excellent Brahmin:

31 The karma-loaded self is re-born
in this world,
the good in virtuous womb,
the evil in evil womb.

32 Good karma leads to the gods.
A mixture of good and bad
leads to human birth.
Deluded, sensual karma
leads to animal birth,
evil karma takes one below.

33 Afflicted with birth, death, and old age,
man is fated to suffer
the consequences
of his karma.

34 Our karma-fettered selves are doomed
to travel endlessly through hell
and a succession
of re-births.

35 Animate creatures suffer in the next life
because of their karma,
which is why they find birth
in impure yonis.

36 There they gather a fresh store of karma
and suffer again,
like a sick man
gorging rich food.

37 Though they suffer, they imagine themselves
to be happy and comfortable;
their karma remains,
and new karma grows, and

38 They suffer, revolving in this world
like a wheel.
If they shed their fetters and purify
their karma

39 By tapasyā, yoga and meditation,
then, O Brahmin,
it is possible for them to attain
the highest realm.

40 By shedding their fetters and purifying
their karma,
men can achieve the sorrowless region
of bliss.

41 The evil-doer addicted to evil
can never give up evil.
We should cultivate goodness,
and avoid wickedness.

42 Whoever nobly and gratefully
does what is good,
obtains dharma, artha, happiness,
and heaven.

43 Those who are free of ill-thinking,
who are wise,
pure and self-controlled, enjoy bliss
now and hereafter.

44 O twice-born one! A man should emulate
the dharma of good people;
he should imitate men of character
who know dharma.

45 These are many who are learned
in the śāstras.
A man should discover his sva-dharma
and perform karma serenely.

46 The wise man delights in dharma
and lives by dharma.
O Brahmin, a man who possesses
the wealth of dharma

47 Waters the root of the plant
that nourishes dharma.
The dharmātmā, acting in this way,
finds peace of mind.

48 He is happy with his friends in this life,
and finds happiness
in the next life too.
Beauty, flavour, sound, touch –

49 Men of dharma get the fruits
of these exactly as they desire.
O Brahmin, man is satisfied
with the fruits of dharma –

50 But this is not real satisfaction.
So he sees with wisdom's eye
the futility of pain and pleasure;
untouched by worldliness,

51 He is free. He does not discard dharma;
he merely becomes indifferent
to the ways of the world.
Seeing everything as ephemeral,

52 He tries to renounce worldliness.
He works out the means of his own mokṣa.
He forsakes wickedness
and adopts selflessness.

53 This becomes his dharma
and leads to his mokṣa.
Tapasyā, self-control, and equanimity
are his means.

54 With them he obtains what he desires.
By subduing his senses,
by self-control, truth-speaking, O excellent Brahmin,
he attains the realm of Brahmā."

55 The Brahmin asked:
"You have mentioned the senses –
what are they? How are they subdued?
What fruits result?

56 O finest of dharma-knowers,
how does one go about
obtaining such fruits?
I want to know this dharma."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TEN

1 Lord-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira (continued Mārkaṇḍeya),
listen to what that dharma-knowing meat-seller
said in reply
to the Brahmin's question:

2 "Excellent Brahmin, men are by nature
eager for useful instruction.
But, after acquiring instruction,
they indulge their kāma and anger.

3 They will do anything to gratify
their passions,
to satisfy their thirst for the pleasures
of eye and palate.

4 Then they get obsessed;
next they become envious;
then comes acquisition-mania;
and finally self-delusion.

5 When obsession, acquisitiveness and envy
take hold,
dharma is forgotten; only mock-dharma
is practised.

6 Practising mock-dharma,
they are content to acquire wealth
by dishonest means.
This was their intention all along, O Brahmin.

7 Their wealth-satiated mind
gets more and corrupted.
When learned men and friends
try to dissuade them,

8 They put forward
weak and unconvincing excuses.
Their attachment to adharma
breeds three kinds of evils:

9 They think evil, they speak evil,
they act evil.
Their persistent adharma destroys
all good qualities.

10 They form friendships
with evilly-inclined types,
and so they suffer in this world
and in the next.

11 All ill-ātmaned men are of this kind.
The man of dharma, however,
sees with wisdom
and is able to discriminate

12 Between happiness and misery.
He is respectful to good men.
By practising goodness himself,
he follows dharma."

13 "Your clarification of dharma," said the Brahmin,
"cannot be bettered.
You have divine power;
you must be a ṛṣi."

14 The meat-seller replied: "Mahā-fortune-favoured
Brahmins deserve the respect *pitṛs* get.
They get the first food-offering;
wise men try always to please them.

15 O excellent Brahmin,
after this namaskāra to Brahmins,
I will discourse on what pleases them.
Here is Brahma-knowledge:

16 The universe
The impossible-to-comprehend universe
Filled with the five mahā-elements
Is Brahma.
Nothing else exists.

17 Sky-ether
Air
Fire
Water
Earth
Are the five mahā-elements.
Sound
Touch
Form
Rasa-taste
Smell
Are their characteristics.

18 These have their own special properties
related to each other.
Fire has sound,
touch, and form;
water has sound, touch, form,
and rasa;
earth has sound, touch, form, rasa,
and smell.

19 The sixth property is Cetanā-Consciousness,
also called Mana-Mind;
the seventh is Buddhi-Intellect,
and then comes Ahaṁkāra-Ego.

20 Then come the five Senses,
then the Ātman,
then the guṇas Sattva, Rājas, and Tamas.
These seventeen
together comprise the primary qualities
of existence.

21 The five Senses, Mind, Intellect,
taken together
with the hidden and manifested mind-perceptions,
make twentyfour guṇas.
I have told you all –
what else would you like to know?"

SECTION TWO HUNDRED ELEVEN

1 The Brahmin,
in reply to the discourse
of the dharma-rich meat-seller,
said these pleasing words:

2 "Excellent man of dharma, it is said
that there are five mahā-elements.
What are the properties
of each of these?"

3 The meat-seller replied: "Earth, Water,
Fire, Air, Sky-Ether –
all these have overlapping properties.
Let me describe them.

4 O Brahmin, Earth has five properties,
Water four, Fire three,
Air and Sky together
have three.

5 Sound, touch, form, rasa
and taste
are the five properties
of Earth.

6 O excellent Brahmin, strict-vowed ṛṣi,
sound, form,
and taste are the properties
of Water.

7 Sound, touch and form are the properties
of Fire;
sound and touch, of Air;
and sound of Sky-Ether.

8 Brahmin, these fifteen properties
in the five elements exist
in all matter
that makes up the universe.

9 They are not opposed to each other;
they exist in different combinations.
When the universe,
moving and moving, is cast

10 In a state of chaos,
every matter-composed being
in due time assumes another body,
and perishes in due time.

11 This mobile and immobile creation
is composed
of these five basic elements
which make up the stuff of life.

12 What is perceptible to the senses
is called 'vyakta' or 'the manifest';
what is not, is the symbol, the ṅga,
'the unmanifest', 'avyakta'.

13 A man is said to be practising tapasyā
when he subdues, with his ātman,
sound, etc., which are involved
in their subjective interplay.

14 Then he has a vision of his ātman
pervading the world,
and the world harmonised in him.
All life becomes one.

15 The man who sees all creatures
as one with Brahma at all times,
is never affected
by any thing inauspicious.

16 The man who has overcome the fetters
of non-knowledge
is eminently fit to travel
on the path of knowledge.

17 The supremely Intelligent Divinity Bhagavān
Buddhiman considers such a person
as without beginning or end,
bodiless, unchanging, incomparable.

18 What you asked me, O Brahmin,
comes from tapasyā,
Tapasyā is acquired only
by controlling the senses.

19 Heaven and hell depend on the senses;
subdued, the senses lead us to heaven;
senses pampered
lead to hell.

20 The yoga that tames the senses
is the highest attainment,
is the root of tapasyā.
Indulgence is hell.

21 Indulgence in the senses
breeds varied vice;
controlling the senses
brings the final perfection.

22 The self-restrained man
who rules his six senses
is never affected by evil;
disaster cannot touch him.

23 The body is a chariot,
the ātman a charioteer,
the senses the horses.
A self-controlled man,
like a skilled charioteer,
drives happily to his goal.

24 Excellent is the driver who knows
how to hold patiently
the reins of the six wild horses,
his senses.

25 When the senses run wild
like horses on a road,
we must rein them in –
and patience always succeeds.

26 When a man's mind is overcome
by any one sense gone wild,
he loses his head,
be becomes a tempest-tossed boat.

27 Men are deluded if they think
they can reap happiness
from the six senses;
those who have studied the senses clearly
are the only ones
who reap any fruits."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWELVE

1 Mārkaṇḍeya continued: After the dharma-rich
meat-seller had clarified these complex points,
the Brahmin eagerly questioned him
on other subtleties, O Bharata descendant.

2 "Tell me exactly," the Brahmin said,
"the nature
of the three guṇas –
Sattva, Rājās, and Tamas."

3 "I will tell you what you ask,"
said the meat-seller.
"I will list separately their natures.
Listen carefully.

4 The quality of Tamas is delusion,
of Rajas activity,
of Sattva illumination;
so Sattva is the best guṇa.

5 The ignorant one, the fool, the uncaring,
the day-dreamer,
the idle, slothful, angry and haughty
are tāmasika types.

6 The pleasant conversationalist,
the serious, ambitious, hard-working,
always active, gregarious –
are rājasika types.

7 The firm-willed, patient,
free from anger and malice,
disinterested in busy-ness, wise, steady –
are sāttvika types.

8 The wise sāttvika man is indifferent
to worldly pursuits.
When worldly matters influence him,
he gets upset and he suffers.

9 He is indifferent to the world
from the very start.
His *ahaṁkāra*-ego soon leaves him,
and integrity shines in him.

10 All the turbulence of contradictory desires
is then stilled in him,
and no doubts then assail him
about his life.

11 O Brahmin! A man born Śūdra,
if he has noble guṇas,
can become a Vaiśya,
and a Vaiśya become Kṣatriya.

12 If a man possesses integrity,
he can even become a Brahmin.
I have described the guṇas –
do you have any other questions?"

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTEEN

1 "How does the body-fire,
combining with the elements,"
asked the Brahmin, "become created life?
How does life-breath
stir its body-frame
into action?"

2 Yudhiṣṭhira (said Mārkaṇḍeya),
this question of the mahā-ātmaned Brahmin
was answered by the meat-seller
in this way:

3 "Life-breath stimulates head,
the seat of consciousness,
and stirs the body-frame:
it is present in head and body.

4 Past, present, and future are linked
with life-breath, *prāṇa*,
the most precious and adorable gift
of Brahma-yoni,

5 The eternal Puruṣa,
the Ātman of all creatures,
The Mahā-Supreme, the Over-Ego,
the totality of all elements,

6 Invisible, Isness, Jiva-Self, Kāla, Prakṛti and Puruṣa;
O best of Brahmins,
it is awake in the waking state,
it is the source of dreams.

7 It gives energy in the waking state,
and effort to the struggling;
when it leaves,
death results;
this Ātman-of-creatures leaves one body
and enters another.

8 This life-breath as *prāṇa* sustains
whatever exists;
as mid-breath, *samāna*, it makes each creature
go its own way.

9 As out-breath, *apāna* based in the stomach,
it carries urine
and other body-wastes to the kidneys
and intestines.

10 As up-breath, *udāna*,
according to those who specialise in personality,
it stimulates strength,
exertion and action.

11 As spread-breath, *vyāna*,
it appears at the various nerve centres
of the human body,
O Brahmin.

12 The inner heat of our tissues,
produced by these breaths,
digests food and nourishes
the whole system.

13 *Prāṇa* and the other breaths
in conjunction
generate the inner heat
which operates the digestion process.

14 Between mid-breath and up-breath
lie life-breath and out-breath;
their collective heat
makes the body grow.

15 From navel to feet
is the region of the rectum;
arteries from this region proceed
to the rest of the body.

16 Life-breath, stimulated by heat,
pushes to the limits of this region
and then, recoiling,
reacts on the same heat.

17 Above the navel
is the region of undigested food;
below it, digested food.
All breaths centre in the navel.

18 Arteries spread from the heart upwards,
downwards, and in all directions.
With the help
of the ten breaths,
they carry food-energy
to all parts of the body.

19 This is how yogis
go to the supreme state,
after self-control, patience,
and focusing the mind on the ātman.

20 Transformed into inner heat,
life-breath is the ātman.
Regarding the ātman, know this, O Brahmin:
it is hidden
by the eleven sense-forms
and their sixteen ramifications.

21 It is eternal but,
like fire purifying itself in an oven,
it is modified
by the physical sense-structure.

22 Like a water-drop rolling off a lotus-leaf,
it rolls off the body.
It is the knowledge-field
achieved through Yoga.

23 Sattva, Rājas, and Tamas
are the constituents of the Jīva-self.
Jīva-Self reflects the ātman;
ātman reflects the Supreme Ātman.

24 Insensible matter
serves the Jīva-self
by spurring activity.
Wise men extol
that which creates
the seven worlds.

25 The universal Ātman shines
in the universe.
The truly learned see it
with the help of subtle wisdom.

26 With the grace of consciousness,
man destroys
good and bad karma,
and achieves the felicity of the ātman.

27 This grace-filled state can be compared
to a fulfilled man sleeping peacefully,
or a lamp shining serenely
in a windless spot.

28 Eating little, meditating early evening
and early morning,
a man sees the pure Ātman
reflected in his own ātman.

29 He sees in his ātman
the Ātman without attributes,
like a dazzling lamp,
and he achieves liberation.

30 Anger and greed are to be crushed
by all means.
This constitutes the pure tapasyā
the ferries a man across.

31 Protect your tapasyā against anger,
dharma against selfishless and ill-will,
learning against pride and insult,
ātman against neglect and carelessness.

32 Non-cruelty
is the greatest dharma,
Forgivenes and fortitude
the greatest strength,
Ātman-wisdom
is the greatest knowledge,
Truth
is the greatest vow of all.

33 Excellent
is the speaking of Truth,
Excellent
is knowledge of the Truth,
The greatest good of creatures
is the greatest Truth.

34 The man who works without hope of reward,
who has renounced selfish desire –
he is the real renouncer,
the truly wise man.

35 Even gurus cannot provide communion
with Brahman,
they can only guide.
The true yoga is renunciation.

36 Do not injure life;
live in harmony with all things.
There is no use brooding on revenge
in this life.

37 Self-effacement, peace of mind,
reward-renunciation –
these bring knowledge.
Ātman-knowledge is the greatest knowledge.

38 In this world and the next,
people should renounce worldly attachment
and cultivate
a sorrow-less calm.

39 The muni who wishes to attain
the unattainable
must perform tapasyā, be self-restrained,
and world-indifferent.

40 Guṇas are not guṇas to him, O Brahmin.
He is not fettered.
He sees only with wisdom's eye,
he finds supreme joy.

41 He renounces pleasure and pain,
and whatever ties him to the world,
and he attains
the bliss of Brahman.

42 O excellent Brahmin.
I have told you all that I have heard.
Is there anything else
you would like to know?"

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FOURTEEN

1 Mārkaṇḍeya said to Yudhiṣṭhira:
When Moksa-dharma was explained
in his manner to the Brahmin,
delighted, he said to the meat-seller:

2 "What you have expounded
sounds very reasonable.
There seems to be nothing about dharma
you do not know."

3 "O excellent Brahmin," replied the meat-seller,
"let me show you the dharma
I have,
by which I have attained happiness.

4 Come with me, revered one, *bhagavan,*
to my inner apartments,
and there, O dharma-wise one,
meet my mother and father."

5 The Brahmin, invited,
entered the inner apartments
and saw a splendid area
divided into separate rooms,

6 Resembling the dwellings of gods,
and worthy of divine praise.
It had scented beds
and luxurious seats.

7 His pūjā-worthy parents had finished their meal
and were relaxing
on the magnificent seat,
dressed in white.
The dharma-rich meat-seller
touched his forehead to their feet.

8 “Dharma-rich son, rise, rise,”
said the aged parents.
“Your dharma pleases us.
may you live long,

9 And be blessed with tapasya,
knowledge and fulfilment.
Like a good son,
you have always honoured us.

10 Even among the gods is none
who gets such respect;
and we live in this house
as if we were gods.
By disciplining your senses you have attained
a Brahmin’s self-control.

11 Your father, grandfather and great-grandfathers
are pleased
with your self-discipline
and your respect for us.

12 In thought, word and action,
you strive to please us;
it seems
you have no other interest.

13 As Paraśurāma, son of Jamadagni,
offered pūjā-respect to his aged parents,
you try to serve us –
and are even better than he.”

14 The dharma-rich meat-seller introduced
the Brahmin to his parents;
they received him
with the traditional welcome.

15 The Brahmin accepted their courtesy
and enquired if they,
their children and servants
were keeping well.

16 “Brahmin,” said the aged couple,
“all in this house,
including the servants, are well.
Revered one, *bhagavan*, was your journey safe?”

17 The Brahmin happily (Mārkaṇḍeya said)
replied "Yes."
Then the dharma-rich meat-seller
said to the Brahmin:

18 "*Bhagavan,* revered one, my father and mother
are the gods I worship:
I give them the same dutiful worship
that gods deserve.

19 Like the thirty-three gods led by Śakra-Indra
who are given pūjā-respect by men,
are my parents
worshipped by me.

20 Just as the twice-born make offerings
to the gods,
I diligently strive to find offerings
for them.

21 O twice-born one, to me my father and mother
are the supreme gods.
I propitiate them with fruits,
flowers, and precious gems.

22 They are to me what Agni is
to the learned;
they are to me like the yajñas
in the four Vedas.

23 My *prāṇa*-breath, wife, children and friends
are for them.
I serve them constantly,
helped by my wife and children.

24 O excellent Brahmin, with my own hands
I help them to bathe;
I wash their feet;
I serve them food.

25 I speak to them on suitable topics,
avoiding whatever is unpleasant or disagreeable.
I will even do adharma
to please them.

26 I am always alert
to be of service to them. O excellent Brahmin!
Taking dharma as my guru,
I perform my duties.

27 O Brahmin! There are five gurus for the man
who wishes to succeed –
father, mother, Agni, ātman,
and a guru.

28 By serving them as is required,
a person obtains
the merit of continually lighting
the sacred fire.
This is the Sanātana Dharma
of the householder."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIFTEEN

1 After introducing his mother and father
as his best gurus,
the dharmātmā meat-seller
said to the Brahmin.

2 "Look at the power of my tapasya!
It has given me super-vision!
That is why you were advised,
'Brahmin, go to Mithilā',

3 By the self-controlled
and truth-speaking lady.
'Go to Mithila, where the meat-seller
will explain dharma.' "

4 "Dharma-rich and strict-vowed one,"
the Brahmin said, "when I recall
what the truthful, virtuous lady said,
I agree with her."

5 "Lord! O finest of Brahmins," said the meat-seller.
"What the one-husbanded lady said about me,
she certainly knew
to be the truth.

6 Because you questioned,
I favoured you with answers.
Listen to me –
I will speak more for your good.

7 O excellent Brahmin,
you have wronged your mother and father
by leaving home to study the Vedas
without their permission.

8 This was not the right way to act,
because the shock
you caused your parents
has made them blind.

9 Return to them and please them.
This will prevent
the ruin of your dharma.
As a mahātmā of tapasyā firm in dharma,

10 You have failed;
therefore, go back and please your parents.
Listen carefully to my words,
and do not behave otherwise.
I speak for your good.
O Brahmin ṛṣi, return today!"

11 The Brahmin replied,
"Virtue-pursuing man of dharma,
what you say is right. May you prosper!
I am pleased with you."

12 The meat-seller said, "Excellent Brahmin,
you are like a god
because you accept the divine, ancient,
and everlasting Dharma
which even pure-minded men
find difficult to follow.

13 Return quickly to your parents;
honour your mother and father with pūjā-respect.
I know no dharma
greater than this."

14 "How fortunate I am," the Brahmin said,
"to have come here and met you.
Such dharma-clarifiers
are hard to come by.

15 Not one in a thousand knows
the truths of dharma.
I am pleased with your truth-speaking.
O bull-brave one! May you prosper!

16 O defectless one, I would have fallen into hell
were it not for you.
I met you
because it was so fated.

17 O tiger-among-men!
As rājā Yayāti was saved
by his virtuous grandsons,
I have been saved by you.

18 I will serve my mother and father
as you have directed.
No ill-atmaned man can discourse
on dharma and adharma.

19 It is very difficult for a Śūdra
to understand the Eternal Dharma.
I do not think
you are a Śūdra.
There must be some other reason
that I do not understand.

20 You must have been born Śūdra
because of your karma.
Tell me the truth.
I am all eager to hear, O mahā-minded one.

21 "O excellent Brahmin, defectless one,"
said the meat-seller,
"Brahmins should not be disrespected;
let me explain my previous life.

22 I was the son of an excellent Brahmin
in a previous birth;
I was a scholar in the Vedas
and Vedāṅgas.

23 I worked out my own degradation –
all my own fault.
A rājā skilled in military matters
was my *sakhā,* my loved-and-loving friend.

24 By mixing with him,
I became an adept archer.
Once it so happened
that he went on a hunt,

25 Surrounded by his ministers
and followed by the pick of his soldiers.
He killed many deer
near an āshram.

26 O excellent Brahmin, I also shot
a swift, fierce, tip-curved arrow
which hit and wounded
a ṛṣi.

27 The Brahmin fell on the ground,
shouting, 'What wrong have I done?
Which man has committed
this crime?"

28 Lord! *Prabhu!* I had thought he was a deer;
I went near him,
and saw him pierced
by my tip-curved arrow.

29 That misdeed of mine caused me
great remorse.
That man of strict tapasyā lay writhing
on the ground.

30 I said to him, 'I did this unknowingly,'
adding,
'O muni, please forgive me,
please forgive me.'

31 But the Brahmin was so blinded by anger
that he said, "Brahmin!
You will be re-born a cruel meat-seller
among the Śūdras.' "

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIXTEEN

1 "After he had cursed me, O excellent Brahmin,"
said the meat-seller,
"I kept repeating before him;
'Forgive me;

2 This wicked deed was done by me unknowingly.
Bhagavan, revered muni,
you should forgive me.
Show some mercy.'

3 The ṛṣi said, 'I cannot withdraw
a curse once cast.
That is final.
But I will show you some kindness.

4 Even though you are re-born Śūdra,
you will cherish dharma,
you will serve
your mother and father.

5 Serving them will bring you fame
and fulfilment.
You will also be able to recall your previous life,
you will attain heaven.

6 When this curse is exhausted,
you will again become a Brahmin.'
This is how I was cursed
by that radiant ṛṣi,

7 And this is how I supplicated
for his forgiveness.
O excellent man, I wrenched the arrow
out of his body,

8 I carried him to the ashram,
and he recovered.
I have told you all that happened
in my past life.

9 O excellent Brahmin,
now it is possible even for me to attain heaven."

10 "O mahā-intelligent one," the Brahmin said,
"all men pass through
joy and arrow.
This should not grieve you.

11 You who know the ways of the world,
you know dharma,
you should know that your caste has determined
your cruel profession.

12 Your caste dictates your profession,
so no bad karma follows.
After some time,
you will revert to Brahminhood.

13 I certainly consider you even now
a Brahmin,
because a Brahmin who is proud
and does wrong

14 And follows evil practices, is no better
than a Śūdra.
The Śūdra who has dharma, truth,
and self-control,

15 I take to be a Brahmin.
A man becomes a twice-born by his deeds;
and bad deeds will drive him
to a terrible doom.

16 You must not be troubled
because men like you,
who know the world's ways and follow dharma,
can never suffer."

17 "Medicines cure body ailments," said the meat-seller,
"wisdom cures mental anguish.
Such is the power of knowledge.
The wise should not cry like little boys.

18 Men of poor intelligence are depressed
by anything disagreeable to them,
or by not getting the pleasurable things
which they desire.

19 Getting attached to things,
and getting separated from them –
this happens to everyone.
Do not think you are the exception.

20 It is natural to withdraw
from what is unpleasant,
and to take steps to prevent
the unpleasant from happening

21 Pointless sorrow can only breed
profound anguish.
Only those who maintain a poise
between joy and sorrow,

22 Are the really happy ones;
they are the wise ones.
The wise are always serene,
the foolish always restless.

23 There is no end to restlessness;
contentment is the only happiness.
The idealistic man
does not grieve.

24 Do not despair.
Despair is a poisonous snake –
is kills the weak-minded
as it kills a child.

25 What kind of manliness is there
in the man
who is moody, vacillating, and feeble
when courage is required?

26 Our actions will have consequences.
What good is there
in surrendering to a lazy, passive,
non-doing indifference?

27 What is the use of complaining?
It is much better
to try and discover
a way out of the misery.

28 The man who attains the highest state
does not grieve;
he sees clearly all imperfection,
he sees totality.

29 Excellent one, learned one,
I do not grieve. I am patient.
I wait. I hide my time.
That is why I am not perplexed."

30 The Brahmin said, "You are wise,
you have knowledge,
you have intelligence.
You are happy in your wisdom. Good!

31 O finest of men of dharma,
I will take leave of you.
Svasti te' astu! May you cherish dharma,
may dharma protect you."

32 The meat-seller did *añjali* before the Brahmin
and said, "So be it."
The Brahmin did *pradakṣiṇa* around him,
and left.

33 The Brahmin returned home
and spent his days
in looking after the welfare
of his father and mother.

34 Yudhiṣṭhira, *tāta,* child,
best among men of dharma,
I have told you in detail
all that you wanted –

35 The greatness of faithful wives
totally devoted to their husbands,
and serving one's parents
as described by the meat-seller.

36 "O most excellent muni," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"Brahmin, finest of dharma-knowers,
this is indeed a remarkable story
illustrating the meaning of dharma.

37 Listening to you, O learned one,
time has passed in a flash;
bhagavan, revered one, I am not yet satiated
with your interpretations of ideal dharma."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVENTEEN

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
After this superb exposition of Dharma,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira asked
the ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya:

2 "Why did Agni in the distant past
hide himself under water?
Why did the mahā-radiant ṛṣi Aṅgiras,
becoming Agni,
carry the libations to the gods
after Agni disappeared?

3 *Bhagavan,* revered one, Fire is one,
but reveals itself as many.
How?
I would like to know this.

4 How was Kumāra-Kārtikeya born?
How was he known as Agni's son?
How did Rudra-Śiva beget him
on Gaṅgā and Kṛttikā?

5 O Bhārgava mahā-muni!
I am agog
with great curiosity;
I must know this."

6 This is very ancient history (Mārkaṇḍeya replied):
it deals
with angry Agni's departure
to the forest for tapasyā,

7 And why Aṅgiras, transforming himself
into Bhagavān Agni,
destroyed darkness and distress
with his radiance.

8 O mahā-muscled one, in the past
mahā-fortune-favoured-Aṅgiras practised
severe tapasyā in his āshram,
so much so
that he excelled Agni,
and illumined the entire universe.

9 Agni also was practising tapasyā
at the time –
and was aggravated.
But Agni could think of no remedy.

10 Bhagavān Havyavāhana-Agni, carrier of libations,
thought:
Perhaps Brahmā has created a second Agni
for the worlds.

11 *Since I am busy with tapasyā,*
my services are no more required.
He wondered
how he could be restored.

12 He was the mahā-muni
lighting up the universe,
and he approached Aṅgiras fearfully.
Aṅgiras said:

13 "You are well-known
in the three stable worlds.
Quickly become Agni again
and illumine the universe.

14 You are Agni, created by Brahmā
to dispel darkness.
Dispeller of darkness,
recover your former radiance."

15 "You have become Hutāśana-Fire," Agni said,
"people call you Pāvaka-Agni, not me.
My reputation
has been ruined.

16 I have surrendered my potency
as the fire-god;
you are now primal Agni.
I am the secondary *prājapatya*-fire."

17 Aṅgiras said, "God of fire,
you are the darkness-dispelling deity.
Light up the ways of people
to heaven,
and make me
your first child."

18 Agni did as Aṅgiras desired, O rājā
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya).
Aṅgiras had a son
whose name was Bṛhaspati.

19 O Bharata-descendant!
Knowing him to be the first son of Aṅgiras
by Agni, the gods came and asked
the reason.

20 Questioned by the gods, he gave the reason,
and the gods were satisfied
with the explanation
of Aṅgiras.

21 I will now describe to you
the various fires of mahā-effulgence
known to Brahmins
by different names.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHTEEN

1 O perpetuator of the Kuru race,
the third son of Brahmā, Aṅgiras,
had Subhā for wife.
Her sons were:

2 Bṛhatkīrti, Bṛhajjyoti, Bṛhadbrahmā, Bṛhanmanā,
Bṛhanamantra, Bṛhadbhāsa, and Bṛhaspati, O rājā.

3 Aṅgiras's eldest daughter's name
was Bhānumatī Devī:
she was the loveliest of all his children,
incomparably beautiful.

4 His second daughter was called
Rāgā, or Love,
because she inspired all
and was loved by all.

5 His third daughter was Sinīvālī,
called "Kapardin-Śiva's daughter",
a girl so slender she was visible now,
then suddenly invisible.

6 His fourth daughter was Arciṣmatī,
the Shining One;
the fifth Haviṣmatī:
the sixth pious Mahiṣmatī.

7 O mahā-minded one! His seventh daughter
was called Mahāmatī,
who was always present at yajñas
of great spendour.

8 Because, seeing her, men ecstatically
whistled "kuhu-kuhu",
the unique enchanting eighth daughter
was called Kuhū.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINETEEN

1 Bṛhaspatī's radiant wife was Candramasī,
by whom he had six sons,
all various fires,
and a daughter.

2 The fire in which ghee-oblations
are offered at Paurṇamāsa
is his mahātmā son
called Śaṁyu.

3 First-born animals are offered to him
at Caturmāsya and Aśvamedha-yajñas;
he is a powerful,
many-flamed fire.

4 Śaṁyu's wife was Satyā,
a girl of peerless beauty,
the daughter of Dharma.
Śaṁyu had one radiant son
and three devoted-to-truth
daughters.

5 The sacred fire that receives
the first oblations
was his son Bharadvāja –
Śaṁyu's eldest child.

6 His second son was Bharata in whose honour
oblations of ghee are offered
with the yajña-ladle
at Paurṇamāsa.

7 He had three daughters, who were looked after
by Bharata;
Bharata's son was also Bharata,
his daughter Bharatī.

8 O Bharata descendant! This Bharata-Agni
was the son of Prajāpati Bharata-Agni;
he was called great
because he was praiseworthy.

9 Vīrā, the wife of Bharadvāja,
gave birth to Vīra.
Brahmins say he, like Soma,
is worshipped with ghee.

10 When he joins Soma
in the secondary ghee-oblations,
he is variously called Rathaprabhū,
Rathadhvāna, Kumbharetā.

11 By his wife Sarayū he had a son
called Siddhi;
he is celebrated in the ritual chant
as the presiding deity.

12 The Niścyavana-fire praises the earth,
and never loses
fame, lustre, prosperity;
he is the symbol of creativity.

13 He is free from imperfection, without misdeed;
he is radiant.
His son is Satya,
who is the regulator of the dharma of time.

14 Because Satya accomplishes the release
of creatures,
he is also called the Freer;
he grants prosperity to his worshippers.

15 Satya's son is called Svana;
and he causes disease,
and agonising suffering.
He is the lord of afflictions.

16 The fire called Viśvajit illuminates
the mind of the universe;
hence its name:
the Universal Radiance.

17 O Bharata descendant! His son was Viśvabhuk,
which is the fire
that is the inner heat that digests
and transforms food.

18 He is a brahmacārī, he is self-disciplined,
he is strict-vowed;
Brahmins offer him pūjā
at the Pāka-yajña.

19 His beloved wife is the holy river Gomatī,
and he influences
men of dharma
to perform religious rituals.

20 The fierce water-swallowing fire
is called Vaḍavā;
it is based in *prāṇa*;
it is known as the "Upward-Mover".

21 The sixth son was Sviṣṭakṛt,
the fire that makes oblations excellent:
udagdvāra oblations
are made to him.

22 When all creatures are stilled,
the Manyuti-fire,
daughter of Bṛhaspati,
rages in splendid fury,

23 A terrible, fearful, wrathful thing.
Her name is Svāhā;
she is ubiquitously present;
her son is not excelled in beauty
even by the gods;
the gods call him "Kāma-fire".

24 She had another son, Amogha,
who could destroy all foes
in battle.
He sits garlanded in his chariot.

25 O mahā-fortune-favoured Yudhiṣṭhira!
Her third son was Uktha,
the progenitor of mahā-Vāca,
the Potent Word,
praised by mantras;
he is the secret of poise.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY

1 Mārkaṇḍeya continued:
Kāśyapa, Vāsiṣṭha, Prāṇa's son Prāṇaka, Cyavana,
And Trivarcā – these are the five Agnis.

2 To obtain these sons,
Uktha practised tapasyā for many years.
He wanted sons as divine and devoted-to-dharma
as those of Brahmā.

3 With the five-fold *vyāhṛti* mantra –
bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ, svaḥ, mahaḥ, janaḥ –
a mahā-radiant five-coloured energy
rose:

4 O Bharata descendant!
Flaming head
Sun-like arms
Golden skin and eyes
Black feet.

5 Its five colours were given to it
by the five great Agnis –
that is why it is called
Pāñcajanya,
the Five-fold Deity,
progenitor of the five tribes.

6 After performing mahā-tapasyā
for ten thousand years,
Pāñcajanya produced
the fierce *pitṛ*-fire,

7 And created from his head Bṛhat,
and from his mouth
Rathantara, "life-stealers";
he created Śiva from his navel,
Indra from strength,
Wind and Fire from *prāṇa*,

8 The two sacred chants Anudatta
from his two arms.
he created Mind, Senses, creatures,
the *pitṛs'* five sons;

9 Whose names are Praṇidhi,
son of Bṛhadratha;
Mahattara, son of Kāśyapa;
Bhanu, son Aṅgiras Cyavana;
Saubhara, son of Varca;
and finally,

10 Anudatta, son of Prāṇa.
Twentyfive beings are credited to him.
The Five-fold One created
another fifteen.

11 Subhīma, Atibhima, Bhīma, Bhīmabala, Abala –
These are the obstructors of yajñas;

12 Sumitra, Mitravān, Mitrajña, Mitravardhana,
Mitradharmā –
These also produce pitfalls in yajñas;

13 Surapravīra, Vīra, Sureśa, Suvarca, Surhanta –
These five belong to the same group.

14 Each category of these beings
has five in it.
They live in this world,
and frustrate yajñas in heaven.

15 They mess up ghee-oblations
and other mahā-rituals,
out of spite for the yajña-fires
carrying oblations to gods.

16 The yajña-rule knowers place oblations
to the gods
at the altar's edge, where the obstructors
dare not go.

17 They fly away with the oblations,
but if mantras are chanted
they are unable
to frustrate the yajña.

18 When virtuous men perform
the *agnihotṛ* sacrifice,
tapasyā-born Brhaduktha appears
on the earth.

19 About Pañcajanya-Tapa's son Rathantara,
it is said
that oblations offered to him
are as if

20 Tapa, the Five-fold One, was happy
With all his mahā-celebrated Agni-sons.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-ONE

1 The Bharata-fire is associated
with guru-strictness.
His other name is Puṣṭimati,
granter of *puṣti* or growth:
and Bharata, "Burden-Bearer,"
for he endures all.

2 The Śiva-fire is engaged
in the pūjā of śakti.
He is Śiva the Auspicious One
because he relieves suffering.

3 The fruits of tapasyā acquired by Pāñcajanya's son
Tapa were passed on
to a mahā intelligent son of his,
Puraṁdara.

4 Another son of his is Uṣmā –
a fire that grows in moistness.
Another son Manu
officiates as Prajāpati.

5 Brahmins who know the Vedas
tell of the glory
of another son, Śambhu,
and also of a fifth, Āvasthya.

6 This is how Tapa created
the five *ūrjaskara*-fires;
all shining like gold
and drinking soma at yajñas.

7 The hugely-auspicious sun, when fatigued,
becomes the Praśrānta-fire,
creating fierce anti-gods
and other creatures.

8 Aṅgiras gave a fresh lease of life
to Tapa's son Bhānu,
also called Bṛhadbhānu
by Veda-knowing Brahmins.

9 Bhānu's wives were Suprajā and Bṛhadbhāsā,
who was the daughter of Sūrya.
They had six sons.
Let me describe them.

10 The first son of Bhānu is Balada,
which is the fire
that invigorates the feeble creatures
of the earth.

11 The second son of Bhanu is Manyumān
which is the fire
that rages furiously when all life
is stilled.

12 Dhṛtimān or Aṅgirā is the Viṣṇu-fire
in whose worship
ghee-oblations are offered at Darśa
and Paurṇamāsa.

13 The fourth son of Bhānu is Agrayana,
which is the fire
to whom, along with Indra,
the food-oblations are made.

14 The fifth son of Bhānu is Agraha,
which is the fire
where oblations are daily made
at the four-month rites.
Stubha is the name of the sixth son
of Bhānu.

15 Niśā was the name of another wife
of Bhānu;
she had a daughter,
two sons Agni and Soma,
and five other refulgent son-deities
of fire.

16 The fire-deity that is offered pūjā
with the first oblations,
along with Parjanya, at Caturmāsya,
is radiant Vaiṣvānara.

17 The fire described as the lord
of all the worlds
is Viśvapati, who is the second son
of Manu.

18 The daughter of Manu is called Sviṣṭakrt,
who gives great fulfilment.
She was Hiraṇyakaśipu's daughter,
that girl named Rohiṇī;

19 Because of her bad karma
she became Hiraṇyakaśipu's wife.
She is one of the Prajāpatis.
The fire in the *prāṇa*
of all creatures is Saṁnihita,
feeler of sound and form.

20 The supernatural being who is revealed
in black and white,
who nourishes fire,
who, without defect, supports this world,

21 And is considered by learned men
as a super-ṛṣi,
is Kapila-fire,
propounder of the Sāṁkhya-yoga.

22 The Agraṇī-fire is the medium
through whom
the world's spirits receive the oblation
called *agra.*

23 These and other radiant Agnis,
famed in the world,
were created to correct any errors
in *agnihotṛ* rites.

24 If the fires intermix by the action of wind,
the error
must be removed by propitiating Śuci
with *aṣṭakapāla* rites.

25 If the south-fire intermixes
with the other two,
aṣṭakapāla rites must be performed
to propitiate Vīti-fire.

26 If the Niveśa-fire mixes
with the Davāgni,
the eight earthen cups must propitiate
the Śuci-fire.

27 If the *agnihotṛ*-fire is touched
by a woman in her period,
aṣṭakapāla rites must be done
before Vasumān-agni.

28 If, during the *agnihotṛ*-rites,
an animal dies
or an animal's death is mentioned,
the error
must be removed by *aṣṭakapāla*-rites
to the Surabhimān fire.

29 A Brahmin who cannot offer oblations
to the sacred fire
for three consecutive nights,
must remove his error
by propitiating the south-fire
with *aṣṭakapāla* rites.

30 An error in the performance
of the Darśa and Caturmāsya rites
must be removed
by propitiation
of the north-fire called Pathikṛt
by *aṣṭakapāla*-rites.

31 If the fire in a pregnant woman's
delivery room
touches the *agnihotṛ*-fire,
correction must be made
by *aṣṭakapāla*-rites offered
to the Agnimān-fire.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-TWO

1 Muditā, the dearly loved water-wife
of the Saha-fire,
who was lord of earth and sky,
had a son Adbhuta or Wonder.

2 There is a common belief
in the community of Brahmins
that Adbhuta is the Ātman
and ruler of all life.

3 Adorable is this fire, always roaming,
Radiant is this fire, everywhere roaming,
He is the lord of life, this Bhagavān,
The fire of mahā-energy.

4 He is offered pūjā in yajñas
as the Gṛhapati-fire;
he carries all the oblations offered
in this world.

5 Saha's fortune-favoured son,
mahā-Adbhuta,
is the womb of waters and the mahā-fortune-favoured
lord of earth and sky.

6 His son, the Bharata-fire,
consumes the corpses of creatures;
he is present in *agniṣṭoma*
as Niyata.

7 When Saha saw Niyata coming
towards him,
he hid undersea in fear.
The gods could not find him.

8 They searched for him everywhere,
but failing to find him,
they went to Atharvan-Aṅgiras.
Agni said to him:

9 "Brave one, carry the oblations
to the gods.
I am too weak to do so.
Become the red-eyed fire."

10 Saying this, Agni left,
and hid himself.
Some fish disclosed his hiding-place,
and he angrily rebuked them:

11 "You will be the food of creatures
in various ways."
Then oblation-carrying Agni talked again
with Atharvan-Aṅgiras;

12 But Agni refused to accept the charge,
though Aṅgiras on behalf of the gods
requested him. Losing consciousness,
he gave up his body.

13 Bereft of his body,
he entered the lower regions.
Touching the earth,
he created different metals.

14 Perfume was created from his pus,
deodars from his bones,
glass from phlegm,
markata-gem from his bile;

15 Black iron from his liver.
All the worlds consist of these substances.
Mica from his nails,
coral from his veins;

16 And many other metals were produced
from his body, O king.
Leaving his flesh-frame,
He became absorbed in tapasyā,

17 Out of which he was roused by the tapasyā
of Bhṛgu and Aṅgiras.
Agni, pleased,
blazed forth again.

18 But when he saw the ṛṣi,
he hid himself again in the mahā-ocean.
His disappearance
filled the worlds with apprehension,
and they sought
Atharvan-Aṅgiras's protection.
The gods and others began singing
Arthavan-Aṅgiras's praises.

19 Atharvan-Aṅgiras scoured the sea
and succeeded in locating Agni,
after which he personally
began to create afresh.

20 That is how Agni was lost
and re-discovered in the ocean.
Atharvan revived him, and he is now
the oblation-carrier of all creatures.

21 From his base in the sea,
he travelled to various lands,
and produced the different
traditional sacred fires.

22 Sindhunada, Pañcanada, Devikā, Sarasvatī,
Gaṅgā, Śatakumbha, Sarayū, Gaṇḍakī;

23 Carmaṇvatī, Mahī, Medhyā, Medhātīthi;
Tāmravatī, Cetravatī, and the third, Kauśikī;

24 Tamasā, Narmadā, Godāvarī,
Veṇā, Upaveṇā, Bhīmā, Vaḍavā, O Bharata-
descendant;

25 Bhāratī, Suprayogā, Kāverī, Murmurā,
Tuṅgaveṇā, Kṛṣṇaveṇā, Kapilā, Śoṇa –

26 These rivers are the fire-mothers.
Adbhuta's wife
was named Priyā,
whose son was called Vibhūrasi.

27 The soma-yajñas equal
the number of fires mentioned.
All these fires were born
from the mind of Brahmā;

28 Atri also conceived these sons
in his own mind
when he wished to expand creation
through his progeny.

29 All these fires proliferated
from his Brahmā-like body.
I have told you now
about the mahātmā fires,

30 Which are unparalleled
refulgent dispellers of darkness.
What the Vedas describe
as the mahātmā Adbhuta-fire

31 Applies to all these fires,
because they are the same in essence.
This *bhagavān* Fire
called the First-Born Aṅgiras

32 Is the essence of all fires,
because he emerged
from Aṅgiras' body,
as did the Jyotiṣṭoma-fire.
Such is the history
of the famed Agni race.
When worshipped with mantras,
these fires become oblation-carriers.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-THREE

1 Having listened to the auspicious
dharma-rich account of Mārkaṇḍeya,
Dharmajrāja Yudhiṣṭhira asked
the tapasyā-practising ṛṣi:

2 "How was Kumāra born?
How were Agni's sons born?
How was he born of Rudra-Śiva,
and from Gaṅgā and the Kṛttikās?
I am filled with curiosity
to know all this."

3 Defectless one, descendant of Kuru
(replied Mārkaṇḍeya),
you have heard about Agni –
now listen to Kārtikeya's birth.

4 I will tell you
about the wonderful, illustrious,
radiant son of Abdhuta,
born of Brahma-ṛṣi wives.

5 A long time ago, the gods and anti-gods
were involved in war,
and the horrendous Dānava anti-gods
seemed to be winning.

6 Seeing his ranks decimated,
and eager to find a general for his army,
Puraṁdara-Indra was afflicted
with worry.

7 He thought: *I must find a man*
of mahā-strength,
who will re-organise
my nearly routed army of gods.

8 He went to Mānasa mountain
with these thoughts.
A girl's weird wailing
reached his ears:

9 "Oh help me!
Help me soon!
Find me a husband to help me!
Or be yourself my husband!'

10 Puraṁdara-Indra said to her: "Do not worry.
You need not fear."
Even as he said this, he saw the Dānava Keśin
standing nearby,

11 Diadem on head, mace in hand,
like a metal-rich hill,
gripping the woman's hand.
Indra said to him:

12 "Who are you, un-āryan wretch,
to treat a woman like this?
I, the thunder-wielder,
order you to stop!"

13 "Pāka-śāsana! Stop interfering!" retorted Keśin.
"She is mine, Śakra-Indra, and I will have her.
Run back to your city
if you value your life!"

14 With these words,
Keśin flung his mace at Indra.
Vāsava-Indra shredded it in mid-air
with his thunderbolt.

15 Keśin, livid with anger,
hurled a shower of rocks at Śatakratu-Indra
who, seeing them coming, O rājā,
for the second time

16 Pulverised them with his thunderbolt.
They fell, a massive heap,
on Keśin, severely wounding
the anti-god.

17 He fled,
leaving the mahā-fortune-favoured girl behind.
After the anti-god had gone,
Vāsava-Indra asked her:
"Who are you? And whose, lovely one?
Why are you here?"

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-FOUR

1 She replied, "I am the daughter of Prajāpati;
my name is Devasenā.
Keśin has abducted my sister
Daityasenā.

2 We sisters, both, used to come here
on Mānasa hill
with our loved-and-loving *sakhīs.*
Prajāpati had given us permission.

3 The mahā-antigod came here daily
courting us.
O Pāka-chastiser, Daityasenā desired him.
I did not.

4 He carried her away,
but you have rescued me, *bhagavan,* revered one.
Devendra, lord of gods,
select an invincible husband for me."

5 Indra replied, "You are related to me.
Your mother is a sister
of my mother Dākṣayaṇī.
Tell me about your powers."

6 "I am powerless," replied Devasenā,
"but I want a powerful husband.
My father's boon,
O mahā-muscled one,
will make him respected
by both the gods and anti-gods."

7 "Devī," said Indra, "faultless one,
I would like to know
what kind of power you want
in your husband."

8 Devasenā replied, "All gods, Dānava-antigods,
yakṣas, nāgas, wicked Daityas,
Kinnaras, rākṣasas will succumb
to his mahā strength;

9 All the creatures of the world
will acknowledge his supremacy –
I want such a man
for my husband."

10 Indra heard her demand, and was disturbed;
he thought:
*There is no husband equal to the requirements
of this devī.*

11 Sun-like, radiant Indra
saw the sun rise on Udaya hill;
he saw the mahā-fortune-favoured moon
merge with the sun.

12 This was on a full-moon *amāvāsyā* night;
on that omnous night
he saw gods and anti-gods
clash on Udaya.

13 Śatakratu-Indra watched blood-red clouds
at the morning *saṁdhyā*;
Bhagavān Indra saw Varuṇa's ocean-abode
become crimson with blood.

14 He saw Agni,
carrying the mantra-blessed oblations
of Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras and others,
enter the orbit of the sun.

15 He saw the twentyfour moon-phase *parvas*
standing near the sun.
Dharma-touched Soma stood at the Rudra-hour
in the presence of the sun.

16 Seeing the interpenetration
of the sun and the moon
at that inauspicious conjunction,
Śakra-Indra said to himself:

17 "This inauspicious conjunction
of the sun and the moon
portends a fearful battle
before the night ends.

18 The river Sindhu is flowing in reverse
with currents of fresh blood;
flaming-faced jackals
howl to the sun.

19 This is a mahā-ominous –
a radiantly ominous – conjunction.
The union of sun, moon, and fire
is a weird phenomenon.

20 If Soma fathers a son now,
that son could be the husband of this girl.
Agni is in the same conjunction
of signs.

21 If Agni fathers a son,
he too could be her husband."
With these thoughts,
illustrious Indra went to Brahmā,

22 Taking Devasenā with him.
He said to Pitāmaha-Brahmā:
"Favour this devī with a splendid warrior
for husband."

23 Brahmā replied:
"Extirpator of Dānava anti-gods,
your wish will be granted.
A very powerful child will be born.

24 Śatakratu-Indra! Hundred-sacrifices-receiver!
That valiant boy will be the husband of this girl,
and the general
of your army."

25 Devendra-Indra and the girl namaskāra-ed Brahmā,
and went to the place
where the great Brahmins,
the powerful divine ṛṣis,

26 Vāsiṣṭha and others, lived.
Led by Śatakratu-Indra,
the gods, eager to drink the *soma*-rasa
according to their share,

27 Went to where the ṛṣis were busy
with the sacrifices.
After the sacred *iṣṭi*-ceremony
of the yajña,

28 The mahātmā ṛṣis offered oblations
to the gods.
The oblation-carrying Adbhuta-fire emerged
from the sun-maṇḍala,

29 And, with restrained refulgence,
stood before them.
O finest of the Bharatas,
the fire entered the yajña-flames,

30 Into which oblations had been offered
with mantras by the ṛṣis,
received the oblations,
and gave them to the gods.

31 He came out from the holy place,
and saw the wives
of the mahātmā ṛṣis
sleeping comfortably in their beds.

32 Their skins had the lustre
of an altar of gold,
the purity of moonlight;
they were shining flames, glittering stars.

33 He looked at the Brahmins' wives
with passionate eyes,
and lusted for them.
Kāma took control of him.

34 But he checked himself,
arguing that this was improper.
He thought: *These Brahmin wives are faithful,*
beyond reach of my kāma.

35 *Yet I do desire to possess them;*
so I will become
their household fire
and so daily look at them.

36 The Adbhuta-fire transformed himself
into a household fire,
and gratified his passion by looking
at the gold-complexioned women daily,
and by touching them
with his flickering flames.

37 Fascinated by their loveliness,
he lived there for a long time.
His passion for them
made him give his heart to them.

38 Because he did not succeed
in getting their love,
afflicted by his own desires,
he went to a forest to commit suicide.

39 The daughter of Dakṣa, Svāhā,
had kāma-longing for him,
and was waiting to discover
a vulnerable spot in him.

40 The faultless girl could find no weak spot
in that cautious deity of fire.
When, however,
he went to the forest,

41 Afflicted by kama, the lovely girl thought:
I desire him deeply
so I will disguise myself
as the seven ṛṣis' wives;

42 *In that way I will find him.*
He deeply desires them:
so I will satisfy his kāma,
and also satisfy mine.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE

1 The ṛṣi Aṅgiras' wife Śivā
had many virtues and accomplishments.
Assuming that Śivā-disguise,
Svāhā

2 Approached the Fire.
The lovely lady said to him:
"Agni, I am overcome by kāma;
satisfy me.

3 If you don't, I will kill myself.
Hutāśana-Agni,
I am Aṅgiras' wife Śivā.
I come here on the advice of others
who sent me to you
after careful thought."

4 Agni asked: "How did you know
kāma had possessed me?
How did the seven ṛṣis' beloved wives,
as you say, know this?"

5 Śivā replied: "We always loved you,
but we feared you.
Knowing your mind at last from the way you behaved,
they sent me to you.

6 Hutāśana-Agni, I am here to satisfy my kāma –
satisfy me.
My sisters-in-law are waiting.
I must hurry back."

7 And Agni was delighted with Śivā-Devī;
he lived with her;
she joyfully coupled with him;
she took his semen in her hand.

8 She was disturbed that whoever
saw her in that disguise in the forest
would wrongly blame
the Brahmin wives and Agni.

9 So she determined:
"I will become a *garuḍī*-bird
and fly out of the forest
without anyone seeing me."

10 Becoming a bird,
she flew out of the mahā-forest
and saw beneath her white mountains,
surrounded by scrub-land,

11 And various trees and plants, guarded
by venomous-looking seven-headed snakes,
and frequented
by male and female rākṣasas,
blood-drinking *piśācas*,
and other horrendous spirits,

12 And rākṣasīs, as well as many species
of birds and beasts.
She suddenly flew up
to an inaccessible peak;

13 From there the lovely lady Śivā
flung the semen in a golden well.
She assumed the forms
of the seven mahātmā-ṛṣis'

14 Wives, and successively she had intercourse
with Pāvaka-Agni.
But she was unable to assume the form
of Arundhatī,

15 Because Arundhatī was a lady
of great tapasyā
who was deeply devoted to her husband.
O finest of the Kauravas!
Śivā flung Agni's semen six times
in the well

16 On the first lunar day.
And it so happened
that an immensely powerful boy
was created there.

17 He was called Skanda the "Spilt One"
and given pūjā-respect by the ṛṣis.
He had six faces; twelve ears, twelve eyes,
twelve feet,

18 One neck, and one stomach.
The body began to take shape
on the second lunar day;
on the third, it became a baby.

19 Skanda's limbs developed
on the fourth day.
Because it was surrounded
by a mass of crimson clouds,

20 Spitting intermittent flashes of lightning,
it looked like the sun
rising among red clouds.
Clutching the great horripilating bow

21 Used by Śiva the slayer of the anti-god Tripura,
for the destruction
of the enemies of the gods,
he roared so fiercely

22 That the three worlds,
with their mobile and immobile life,
were petrified.
Hearing that mahā-cloud-booming roar,

23 The mahā-nāgas, Citra and Airāvata,
trembled in fear.
Seeing them frightened,
the little boy, dazzling

24 Like a brilliant sun,
seized them with two hands.
He held a dart
in another hand,

25 And a fat, red-crested huge cock
in a fourth.
Agni's mighty-armed son
noisily played about.

26 He had a splendid conch in two hands;
when he blew it,
even the most powerful creatures
shuddered.

27 He beat the air with two hands,
playing on the hill-top;
it looked as if Mahāsena-Skanda
could devour the three worlds.

28 He looked like the sun itself
rising in the sky.
The brilliantly radiant,
impossible-to-equal boy,

29 Sitting on the hill-top,
saw with his many faces
events happening all around him,
and he roared again.

30 Hearing his roars,
many creatures collapsed on the ground
in sheer terror.
They clamoured for shelter.

31 All the people who sought this god's protection –
all from different castes –
are known by Brahmins
as his followers.

32 He rose, and dispelled the fears
of all creatures.
The mahā-muscled boy stringing his bow,
shot arrows at the White Mountain.

33 Those arrows smashed the hill
called Krauñca, Himavat's son;
through that breach,
haṁsa-swans and vultures migrate to Meru.

34 Wounded, the Krauñca hill toppled,
shrieking in agony;
seeing him fall, the other hills also
began to screech.

35 Incomparably powerful Skanda
heard the groaning hills
but remained unmoved;
he roared, and lifted his śakti-spear.

36 The mahātmā flung his dazzling śakti
and in one hit
shattered the peaks
of the awesome White Mountain.

37 Badly mauled, the White Mountain,
in great fear of the mahātmā boy,
detached itself from earth
and fled along with the other hills.

38 Divested of her mountain-jewels,
the earth lamented;
she approached Skanda,
who restored her glory to her.

39 The mountains namaskāra-ed Skanda
and returned to earth.
On the fifth lunar day,
all creatures worshipped Skanda.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX

1 When that mahā-powerful, strong-in-truth
Mahāsena-Skanda was born,
many terrifying and awesome omens
were noticed.

2 Male-female, heat-cold and other opposites
were reversed;
the planets, directions and the sky
were shot through
with dazzling light,
the earth seemed to roar.

3 World-welfare-seeking ṛṣis saw
these mahā-ominous signs
and tried calmly to restore tranquillity
in the universe.

4 The dwellers of the Caitraratha forest
said among themselves:
"These disasters have overtaken us
because Pāvaka-Agni

5 Had intercourse with six wives
of the seven ṛṣis."
Some, who saw her as a *garuḍi*-bird, said:
"A bird did this."

6 But none imagined that Svāhā-Śivā
was the cause of the tumult.
When the bird-lady
heard them,

7 She said, "He is my son",
and she went to Skanda
and said to him,
"I am your mother."

8 When the seven ṛṣis heard
a mahā-powerful and radiant son had been born,
they rejected their six wives –
all except Arundhatī-Devī,

9 Because they heard the forest-dwellers say
that those six women
were the cause of the boy's birth.
Repeatedly, Svāhā said, "He is my son.

10 I know the truth.
What the people say is not true."
Viśvāmitra, after performing
the seven-ṛṣis' yajña, O rājā,

11 Had without being noticed followed Agni
into the forest
when Agni was kāma-possessed;
and he knew all that had happened.

12 Viśvāmitra was the first to seek
Kumāra-Skanda's protection,
and he offered sacred praise in honour
of Mahāsena-Skanda.

13 The mahā-muni Viśvāmitra performed
all the thirteen auspicious
sacraments and ceremonies
pertaining to a growing child.

14 Viśvāmitra did all this
for the good of the world,
and became a favourite of Skanda
because he celebrated

15 The glories of six-faced Skanda,
and honoured the cock,
Śakti-devī
and the first devotees of Skanda.

16 The mahā-muni informed the seven ṛṣis
about the transformations of Svāhā-Śivā
and declared
that their wives were innocent.

17 The seven ṛṣis learnt the truth from him,
but abandoned their wives nonetheless.
The gods heard of the prowess of Skanda,
and said to Vāsava-Indra:

18 "Devendra-Indra, destroy Skanda,
for his power is incredible.
If you do not kill him,
he will conquer us

19 As well as the three worlds;
he will supplant you as the chief god."
Worried, Śakra-Indra said:
"This boy is mahā-powerful;

20 He has the prowess to destroy
even the Creator of the worlds.
I do not dare to match strength
with him."

21 They countered: "You are a coward,
to speak like this.
Let all the world-mothers go today
to Skanda.

22 They can summon any power they desire.
Let them kill this boy."
But when the mother-goddesses saw him,
they paled,

23 For they recognised him as invincible.
They sought his protection,
and said to him,
"O mahā-powerful one, be our son.

24 We are brimming over with love for you;
suck our breasts,
from which milk is spilling out."
Eager to suck them,

25 Mahāsena-Skanda received them graciously
and did as they wished.
He saw his father Agni
striding towards him.

26 He offered pūjā-respect to his father,
and Agni
and the mother-goddesses
looked after Mahāsena-Skanda.

27 The Wrath-conceived World-Mother
with spike in hand
kept special watch over him,
as does a nursing mother over a child.

28 The blood-drinking, wrath-displaying
Daughter of the Sea of Blood
put Mahāsena-Skanda to her breast
and suckled him like a mother.

29 Agni transformed himself
into a goat-faced human and,
followed by a cluster of children
on the hill-top,
he delighted the boy
with various toys and playthings.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-SEVEN

1 The planets, their satellites, the ṛṣis
and the World-Mothers,
Hutāśana-Agni and various other resplendent,
blazing courtiers

2 And many fearful dwellers of heaven
attended on Mahāsena-Skanda;
all of them were eager
to serve him fully.

3 The chief of the gods Indra,
hoping to win, but unsure,
mounted his elephant Airāvata,
and marched against Skanda.

4 Surrounded by hosts of gods,
and wielding his thunderbolt,
mighty Indra launched a concerted attack
on Skanda.

5 They screamed their war cries.
Armed with various weapons,
wearing a variety of armour, carrying bows,
riding various animals,

6 They advanced. When Skanda saw
the glittering hosts coming,
led by Śakra-Indra
bent on killing him –
resplendently attired Indra –
he threw out a fierce challenge.

7 O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira! Indra, the chief god,
in order to boost
the morale of his army,
uttered a ferocious war cry.

8 Marching swiftly to destroy the son of Agni,
spurred by the pūjā-praise
of the thirty gods and ṛṣis,
Vāsava-Indra reached Kārtikeya-Skanda's abode.

9 The chief god and his hosts of gods
yelled leonine roars.
Skanda heard them,
and countered with an oceanic roar,

10 Which so agitated the gods
that they wavered like the ocean;
after which they seemed
to be petrified.

11 Seeing the gods advancing
with the intention of killing him,
Agni's son Skanda, roused,
bellowed forth breath-flames at them.

12 The shoots of flame scorched the gods,
consuming heads,
bodies, arms, and the animals
they were riding.

13 They fell like stars dislodged
from their orbits.
Sorely harassed, they sought the protection
of the son of Agni,

14 And forsook the thunder-wielder Indra.
This brought them peace.
Śakra-Indra, alone,
hurled his thunderbolt at Skanda.

15 Mahārāja! It sliced through the right side
of that mahātmā,
causing the flesh
to fall apart.

16 But immediately another body
grew from that part –
a gold-skinned youth with a mace
and divine ear-rings.

17 He was called Viśākha, born of the thunderbolt,
dazzling like the fire of doomsday Kāla.
Indra, seeing a second creature born,
was alarmed,

18 And with folded hands did *añjali* before Skanda,
who calmed his fears.
The gods rejoiced
and their musicians played their instruments.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-EIGHT

1 Let me tell you
about the weird-looking, fearful followers
of Skanda
(Mārkaṇḍeya continued).
Pierced by the thunderbolt,
Skanda produced many male children.

2 These fierce children spirit away
babies new-born or in the womb.
Thunder-stricken Skanda
produced mahā-powerful girl-children too.

3 These children took Viśākha
as their father.
Goat-faced Bhagavān Skanda protected
his numerous

4 Sons and daughters with great care,
watched by the World-Mothers.
Skands is known
as a Bhadraśākha and Kausala.

5 For this reason earth-dwellers call Skanda
"Children-Father", "Kumāra-pitara".
Rudra as Agni
and Umā as Svāhā

6 Are worshipped by those
who desire sons.
The daughters of the Hutaśana-fire-deity
named Tapa

7 Went to Skanda, and he asked,
"What do you wish?"
The girls replied,
"Make us the mothers of the worlds,

8 Respected with pūjā and loved –
this is our wish."
He said, "So be it."
Large-minded Skanda added repeatedly:

9 "You will be divided into *śiva* and *aśiva* –
auspicious and inauspicious world-mothers"
Acknowledging him as son,
they left.

10 Kākī, Halimā, Mālinī, Bṛṁhatā,
Āryā, Palālā, Vaimitrā – were Śiśu's seven mothers.

11 They had a massive, pink-eyed,
terrifying and irrepressible son called Śiśu,
who was born
by the grace of Skanda.

12 He is known as the eighth
of the heroic sons of Skanda's mothers;
and if the goat-face deity is included,
the ninth.

13 O rājā! You should know that the sixth face
of Skanda is a goat's:
situated in the middle –
it is adored by the mothers.

14 That head of Skanda is the greatest;
because it radiated divine śakti,
he is Bhadraśākha,
the "Lustrous-Branching".

15 O lord of men! All these occurrences happened
on the fifth day of the bright lunar fortnight;
on the sixth,
a fierce battle took place.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-NINE

1 Skanda had golden armour and a garland;
he wore a gold-crested crown;
his eyes were golden,
they dazzled.

2 His sharp teeth sparkled;
he was dressed in a red robe;
he was handsome, auspicious;
beloved to the three worlds.

3 He was a born-giver;
he wore ear-rings, he was brave and young.
The lotus-lovely goddess Śrī
appeared before him.

4 He received the radiance
of the goddess of prosperity,
the lustrous and delicate
full-moon-lovely lady.

5 All the mahātmā Brahmins paid homage
to the mahā-powerful deity
and the mahā-ṛṣis
said to Skanda:

6 "Golden-wombed one! Hiraṇyagarbha!
May you prosper!
Be like Śaṅkara!
In six nights the worlds have become yours!

7 O best among the gods!
By your grace the three worlds fear no more.
Become the Indra of the worlds,
and grant them protection."

8 "Rich-in-tapasyā ascetics,"
"what does Indra do for the worlds?
How does the lord of the gods Sureśvara
protect the hosts of gods?"

9 The ṛṣis replied: "Sureśvara-Indra gives strength,
energy, offspring and joy to creatures.
Propitiated, he grants
whatever they desire.

10 He destroys the wrong-doers
and exalts the vow-keepers;
Bala-slaying Indra assigns all creatures
their respective duties.

11 He is the sun and moon
where there are no sun and moon.
He officiates for Fire,
Earth, Wind and Water.

12 These are the duties of Indra.
His potential is enormous.
You are enormously powerful too.
Become our Indra."

13 And Śakra-Indra said, "Mahā-muscled one,
make us happy by being our lord.
You deserve the honour.
Accept the office today."

14 Skanda replied: "Śakra-Indra,
rule the three worlds
as you have always done,
with old dignity and new-won glory.
I will happily serve you.
I do not wish to be Indra."

15 "Hero," said Indra, "your prowess is incredible.
Destroy the gods' enemies.
Your powers
have astonished everyone.

16 My powers have left me.
You have defeated me.
If I now behave like Indra,
who will believe me?

17 They will all try to create a rift
between us.
They will all take sides –
some for you, some for me.

18 *Tāta!* child! When two factions form like this,
O mahā-powerful one, war is inevitable.
You will defeat me in that war,
and become lord of the worlds."

19 "You are the rājā of the three worlds,
and my rājā," Skanda replied.
"May you always prosper. Command me.
I will do as you say."

20 Indra said,
"Since you ask me,
I will continue as Indra.
If you mean what you said,

21 Skanda, then let me tell you
how I would like you to serve me.
O mahā-powerful one!
Become the general of my army of gods."

22 Skanda said, "Appoint me general of your army
for the rout of the anti-gods
and the welfare
of gods, Brahmins, and cows."

23 Appointed general by Maghavat-Indra
and all the other gods,
and given pūjā-respect by the mahā-ṛṣis,
Skanda looked magnificent.

24 The royal golden umbrella
over his head blazed
like a brilliant maṇḍala
burning in its own flames.

25 Illustrious Tripura-slaying Indra
personally placed
a divine gold garland made by Viśvakarma
round Skanda's neck.

26 O foe-crushing Yudhiṣṭhira! Most excellent of men!
Śiva and Umā Devī
came there and honoured
the greatness of Skanda.

27 Bull-bannered Bhagavān Śiva honoured Skanda
joyfully, with deep affection.
Brahmins call Agni
Rudra,

28 Which is why Skanda is referred
to as Rudra's son.
Because all the dwellers of heaven
witnessed Rudra

29 Personally arrive and honour
the mighty Skanda,
Skanda is described
as the son of Rudra.

30 Because Skanda was born
as a result of Rudra
entering the body of Fire,
Skanda is the son of Rudra.

31 O Bharata-descendant! Because Fire-Rudra Svāhā,
and the six wives
were the cause of Skanda's birth,
he is known as Rudra's son.

32 The son of Pāvaka-Agni
was swaddled in two red sheets.
He looked like the sun
peering from crimson clouds.

33 Agni gave him a red cock
as his symbol.
On his chariot's flagstaff,
it looked like Kāla's conflagration.

34 The Energy that gives victory to the gods,
and purpose and peace and glory
to the world's creatures,
approached Skanda.

35 And a mystic power
seemed to enter his body-armour –
the mystic power that brings success
on the battlefield.

36 Śakti, dharma, strength, vitality, radiance,
truth, progress,
Brahmin-ness, clear-thinking,
protection of bhaktas,

37 Destruction of foes,
and care of the world's creatures –
these, O lord of men, are the qualities
associated with Skanda.

38 Installed general by the gods,
he looked happy and confident.
Dressed magnificently,
he shone like the full-moon-maṇḍala.

39 From all sides came sounds
of the chanting of Vedas,
and the divine music of gods and gandharvas;
and the apsarās

40 Surrounded him; they were exquisitely dressed;
smiling *piśācas* and gods
also surrounded
the splendid son of Agni.

41 Surrounded by the dwellers of heaven,
Agni's son
enjoyed himself fully.
To the dwellers of heaven,

42 The general of the gods Skanda
looked like the sun emerging gloriously
after darkness has been scattered.
Thousands of gods

43 Came to him, saying,
"You are our leader."
Bhagavān Skanda,
surrounded and praised by the gods,

44 Reciprocated their praise.
Śatakratu-Indra of a hundred sacrifices also,
after appointing Skanda general
of the god-armies,

45 Remembered Devasenā
whom he had once saved from Keśin.
He thought: *Skanda is Brahmā's choice*
to be Devasenā's husband.

46 So he fetched her;
she glittered with jewels and ornaments.
Bala-slayer Indra said to Skanda,
"Most excellent god,

47 Even before your birth,
Self-Born Svayambhu-Brahmā chose this girl
to be your wife –
accept her with proper rituals and mantras,

48 And take this devī
by her lotus-lovely right hand."
Skanda accepted Indra's words
and took Devasenā for wife.

49 Learned-in-mantras Bṛhaspati chanted
the ritual mantras
before the sacred fire,
and Devasenā became wife of Skanda.

50 Brahmins know her also
by other names –
Ṣaṣṭhī, Lakṣmī, Āśā, Sukhapradā, Sinīvalī,
Kuhū, Sadvṛtti, Aparājitā.

51 Devasenā accepted Skanda as her husband forever
and the goddess of wealth Devī Lakṣmī
in her embodied form
attended on him after that.

52 Because Skanda achieved fame
on the fifth linar day,
it is called Śrīpañcamī,
or the "Auspicious Fifth";
and the sixth being his day of success
is also mahā-auspicious.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY

1 When the six wives of the seven ṛṣis
learnt about
Skanda's appointment
as general of the god-armies
and of his marriage to Devasenā,
they came to him.

2 Abandoned by the ṛṣis,
the maha-vowed ladies of dharma
approached the illustrious general
and said to him:

3 "Son, our god-like husbands
have abandoned us angrily
for no reason.
We are banished from our holy places.

4 Someone has spread word
that we gave birth to you.
You must save us from the false
and malicious scandal.

5 *Prabhu!* Lord!
We do wish to adopt you as our son,
in order that we may achieve undying heaven,
Repay your debt to us."

6 "Ladies without the least blemish,"
said Skanda, "be my mothers.
I am your son.
Your wish will be granted."

7 Śakra-Indra at this time indicated his desire
to speak to Skanda
who said, "What is it? Tell me."
Vāsava-Indra said:

8 "Abhijit Devī, younger sister of Rohiṇī,
jealous and eager to achieve the honour
of being the eldest,
is practising forest-tapasyā.

9 I do not know how to replace
this vanished star.
Skanda, may you succeed!
Discuss this matter with Brahmā.

10 Dhaniṣṭhā and other constellations,
including Rohiṇī,
were created by Brahmā.
Rohiṇī completed the constellations."

11 When Śakra-Indra finished speaking,
Skanda assigned Kṛttikā to a place in the sky;
presided over by Agni,
she shines with seven heads.

12 The bird-lady Vinatā said to Skanda,
"You are my son,
entitled to offer me the funeral *piṇḍa.*
I wish to be with you always."

13 Skanda replied, "*Evamastu*! So be it!
Devī-Mother, namaste. Give me a mother's love.
Pūjā-respected by your daughter-in-law Devasenā,
stay with me."

14 The world-mothers said to Skanda,
"The learned describe us
as the mothers of the world's creatures.
But all we desire
is to be your mothers –
give us your respect and pūjā."

15 "Be my mothers," replied Skanda,
"and let me be your son.
And let me know
how I can please you."

16 "In the ancient past," the mothers said,
"some ladies were appointed World-Mothers.
Dismiss them,
and put us in their place.

17 O bull-brave deity! Let us receive
from the worlds the pūjā that they received.
Restore to us the children they deprived us of
by falsely accusing us."

18 Skanda replied, "You cannot receive back
the children taken from you.
If you wish,
I can give fresh children."

19 "In that case, we would like to devour the children
of those World-Mothers and their grandsons,
all except you.
Grant us this wish."

20 "I can grant you their children," said Skanda.
"Your request is disturbing.
But may you prosper! I namaskāra you.
Look after them.

21 “Skanda,” replied the mothers,
“we will protect them.
Prabhu! Lord! May you prosper!
We will be with you.”

22 Skanda said, “You are free
to terrorise humans
until they reach the age of adolescence –
their sixteenth year.

23 I will grant you an exhaustless
and terrifying vitality –
this will enable you to live happily
and deserve pūjā-respect.”

24 Immediately (Mārkaṇḍeya continued)
a mahā horrific fire-creature
issued from Skanda’s body
to devour the progeny of mortals.

25 He collapsed on the ground, hungry,
almost unconscious.
Ordered by Skanda,
he assumed a fear-instilling shape.

26 Brahmins call this spirit
Skandāpasmāra “Skanda’s Forgetfulness.”
And Vinatā is called Śakunigraha,
the maha-horrific Bird-Clutcher.

27 The rākṣasī called Pūtana by the learned
is Pūtanāgraha –
a cruel
and tormenting spirit.

28 Another hideous spirit
is called Śītapūtanā –
this horrendous *piśācī* causes abortions
in women.

29 The mahā-graha Aditi is also called Revati –
her spirits are the Raivatas;
they are mahā-malignant
towards children.

30 O Kaurava descendant,
Diti the mother of Daityas
is Mukhamaṇḍikā,
who relishes the flesh of babies.

31 All male and female children
who issued from the body of Skanda
are mahā-malign
and feed on human foetuses

32 These horrendous male spirits are also the husbands
of the female spirits,
and they pounce
on unsuspecting children.

33 O king! Surabhi, the mother cow
(as the learned call her),
is Śakuni-Vinatā's vehicle,
and together they devour children.

34 O lord of men! Saramā, the dog-mother devī,
makes it her habit to devour babies
while they are still
in the wombs of mothers.

35 The tree-mother dwells
inside the *karañja*-tree;
she is serene, she grants boons,
and is compassionate to all.

36 Those who desire progeny
pay their respects
to the spirit in the *karañja*-tree.
Eighteen meat-fond spirits,

37 Who also relish win and similar foods,
stay in the pregnancy-room
for ten days.
Kadrū enters the womb.

38 And there she warps the foetus,
causing the mother
to give birth to a nāga-serpent.
The gandharva-mother removes the foetus,

39 And earth-dwellers describe it
as a miscarriage.
The apsarā-mother removes the foetus
from the womb,

40 And the learned declare
that the child is still-born.
The daughter of the red sea
is the nurse of Skanda.

41 Therefore she is called Lohitāyani,
and offered pūjā under the kadamba-tree.
Āryā is to females
as Rudra-Śiva to males.

42 She is the mother of Kumāra-Skanda,
and propitiated for the welfare of all children.
I have described
the spirits that affect children.

43 Until the children reach their sixteenth year,
these spirits affect them
for ill and good.
The male and female spirits

44 I have described are known
as the spirits of Skanda.
They are propitiated variously
with burnt offerings,
ablutions, sacrifices unguents, collyrium,
and by worship of Skanda.

45 O Indra-among rājās!
When they are given respect and honour,
they grant prosperity,
bravery and long life.

46 I now namaskāra Maheśvara,
and describe to you
the spirits who influence humans
after their sixteenth year.

47 The man who, awake or asleep, sees gods,
soon becomes mad.
This happens under the influence
of the god-spirits.

48 The man who, seated in comfort
or lying in bed,
sees his *pitṛs*, soon turns mad.
Pitṛ-spirits cause this.

49 The man who insults the Siddhas,
and is cursed by them,
soon turns mad. The Siddha-spirits
are the cause of this.

50 The spirit under whose spell a man
smells sweet scents and tastes subtle rasas
and turns mad,
is the rākṣasa-spirit.

51 The spirit under whose spell a man
is possessed by celestial music
and turns mad,
is the gandharva-spirit.

52 The spirit under whose spell a man
is hounded by *piśācas*
and soon turns mad,
is the *piśāca*-spirit.

53 When a yakṣa-spirit somehow or other
enters a human body,
that person turns mad.
This is the yakṣa-spell.

54 The sickness of depression of the man
whose nature is corrupted by vices
can be cured by methods
laid down in the śāstras.

55 Men lose their minds from worry,
from fear, from a shocking experience.
The solution lies
in calming their nerves.

56 There are three kinds of malignant spirits –
some are playfully mischievous,
some are gluttonous,
and some are sensual.

57 These spirits pursue a man
until he is seventy years old.
After that, the only spirit that remains
is fever.

58 These spirits cannot affect
the self-controlled and mind-balanced,
the unlazy, clean,
the theist, the śraddhā-possessing.

59 I have described to you all the spirits
that afflict the nature of human beings.
The bhaktas of Maheśvara-Śiva
will be unharmed.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-ONE

1 After Skanda had done
what was desired by his mothers,
Svāhā came to him and said,
"You are the son of my womb.

2 I wish that you should give me
the ultimate happiness."
Skanda said to her:
"What kind of happiness do you want?"

3 "O maha-muscled one,
I am Dakṣa's favourite daughter, Svāhā.
From my childhood
I have loved Hutāśana-Agni.

4 But Pāvaka-Agni does not care for me,
he has no feelings for me.
I want to be always
with him."

5 Skanda replied:
"The oblations that good men offer, devī,
to gods and *pitṛs*, the Brahmin mantras
will have 'Svāhā!' attached

6 To them – provided these men
stay on the path of goodness.
Thus, lovely lady,
you will always be with Agni."

7 Given this pūjā-respect by Skanda,
Svāhā was delighted.
Being united with her lord Pāvaka-Agni,
she offered pūjā-respect to Skanda.

8 Prajāpati-Brahmā, lord of creatures,
said to Mahāsena Skanda:
"Go, and see your father Mahādeva-Śīva,
the destroyer of Tripura.

9 Rudra-Śiva has entered Agni,
and Uma has entered Svāhā,
and together have made you invincible
for the good of the world.

10 Some semen that mahātmā Rudra-Śiva
spurted into Uma's-yoni
spilled on this hill,
producing Miñjika and Miñjikā.

11 Some of it spilled in the blood-red sea,
some in the rays of the sun,
some on earth, some on trees –
five spurts in all.

12 Wise earth-dwellers should know
that your numerous fierce-flesh-eating followers
were produced
from these spurts of semen."

13 "I understand," said Mahāsena-Skanda,
and proceeded to offer pūjā-respect
to Maheśvara-Śiva
with filial devotion.

14 Men who seek wealth should offer pūjā
with sunflowers to these five spirits;
propitating them
also prevents diseases.

15 The twins Miñjika-Miñjika
are children of Rudra-Śiva,
and those who desire their children's good
should namaskāra them.

16 Those who are eager for progeny
should offer namaskāra
to the female cannibal spirits called the Vṛddhikās
begotten by the semen in trees.

17 The *piśācas* are divided
into innumerable classes.
King, let me now tell you
about Skanda's bells and flags.

18 Indra's elephant Airāvata
had two bells called Vaijayanti.
Wise Indra personally brought them
and gave them to Guha-Skanda.

19 Viśākha took one and Skanda the other.
The flags
of both Kārtikeya-Skanda and Viśākha
arc bright red.

20 Mahā-powerful Mahāsena-Skanda
was delighted
with the toys and contraptions
presented to him by the gods.

21 Surrounded by the gods and hosts of *piśācas*
on the golden peak,
he blazed in the splendour
of fulfilment.

22 The forest-clad hill shone
with his radiant presence,
as cave-studded Mandara mountain shines
is the rays of the sun.

23 Lovely flowers –
saṁtānaka, and *karavīra,*
and *pārijāta*, hibiscus,
and groves of aśoka,

24 Wild-growing *kadamba* –
blossomed in the forests.
Deer and birds abounded
on that pure-white hill.

25 Gods and deva-ṛṣis came in hosts
to rest there;
clouds boomed like tūrya-drums,
like the waves of the ocean.

26 The gods, gandharvas and apsarās
began to dance.
And the happiness of all creatures
burst out in tumultuous song.

27 It looked as if Indra and all the worlds
had settled on that white hill.
All gazed at Skanda
with untiring satisfaction.

28 When Bhagavān Skanda was appointed general,
blissful Hara-Śiva rode with Pārvatī
in a dazzling chariot
to Bhadravaṭa.

29 With thousands of lions pulling the chariot
it looked as if Kāla was driving.
Hosts of gods
followed the chariot,

30 Which raced through space
as if hungrily devouring it.
It struck terror in the hearts
of all creatures

31 Of the moving and unmoving worlds.
The lions growled
as they rushed across space,
carrying Pāśupati-Śiva and Umā-mātā –

32 Both as resplendently dazzling as Indra's bow
shining through cloud-masses.
In front was Bhagavān Dhaneśa-Kubera
and his Guhyakas

33 Riding on the shoulders of humans;
Kubera rode in his exquisite Puṣpaka chariot,
Śakra-Indra rode
on his elephant Airāvata,

34 Forming the rear-procession of bull-bannered
boon-granting Vṛsabhadhvaja-Śiva.
Garland-adorned Jṛmbhaka yakṣas
and rākṣasas

35 Formed the right wing of Śiva's army,
along with the mahā-yakṣa Amogha.
On the right also
were great warriors,

36 The Vasus and the Rudras.
Fearful Yama marched
in the company of death,
and behind him

37 Were all manner of ghastly Diseases.
Immediately following
Yama and his Diseases
was the terrifying trident

38 Of Rudra-Śiva called the Vijaya,
sharp and richly-ornamented,
carried by devotees. The lord of waters
Bhagavān Varuṇa with his *pāśa*-noose

39 Weapon, surrounded by various water-creatures,
marched with the trident.
The Vijaya was followed
by Rudra-Śiva's weapon Paṭṭiśa,

40 Guarded by mace-, club-,
and other weapon-carriers.
O rājā! The Paṭṭiśa itself was followed
by Rudra-Śiva's mahā-radiant royal umbrella,

41 And by the *kamaṇḍalu*-vessels
protected by the mahā-ṛṣis.
On the right also was the sceptre,
led by Bhṛgu and Aṅgiras.

42 Last of all came Rudra-Śiva
on his dazzling-white chariot.
His presence was sufficient
to inspire the hosts

43 Of gods who accompanied him with horripilating joy.
The ṛṣis, gods, gandharvas, and *bhujaga*-serpents,

44 The rivers, lakes, seas, and apsarās,
The planets, stars, and children of the gods,

45 And exquisitely lovely girls followed Rudra-Śiva.
The beautiful graceful ladies scattered flowers.

46 Parjānya-Indra namaskāra-ed Pinākin-Śiva
as he passed.
Soma held a white umbrella
over the *pināka*-wielder,

47 And Agni and Vāyu fanned him
with yak-tails.
O rājā! He was followed
by the illustrious Śakra-Indra.

48 Accompanied by rāja-ṛṣis
who sang the praises of Śiva.
Gaurī, Vidyā, Gāndhārī,
Keśinī, Mitrā,

49 And Sāvitrī were the ladies of the hills
who followed Pārvatī,
along with the Vidyās created
by the learned.

50 The rākṣasa-spirits who communicate
Skanda's commands
to the different wings of the army –
commands that Indra
and other gods unquestioningly obey –
were the standard-bearers.

51 The joy-granting yakṣa-leader Piṅgala,
the loved and loving *sakhā* friend of Rudra-Śiva
who haunts funeral pyres
marched merrily with them.

52 He would sometimes run ahead,
sometimes fall back –
there was no knowing what unsteady Piṅgala
would do next.

53 Death-bound man offers pūjā to Rudra-Śiva
with good karma.
Śiva is the chief Deity,
is Rudra, is the Pitāmaha.

54 Mortals offer pūjā to Śiva-Maheśvara
in different ways.
Skanda, the gods' general, son of the Kṛttikās,
always honouring Brahmins,
surrounded by the gods,
followed the lord-god Deveśa-Śiva.

55 Śiva said gravely to Skanda –
Mahādeva speaking to Mahāsena –
"Command the god-armies' seventh unit,
the Mārataskandha."

56 Skanda replied,
"Prabhu! Lord, it will be done.
I accept command of the seventh unit.
Command me again."

57 "Son," said Rudra Śiva, "I will come
whenever you need me.
Look up to me, have faith in me.
You will prosper."

58 Saying this (continued Mārkaṇḍeya),
Maheśvara-Śiva embraced Skanda
and gave him leave to go.
After Skanda left, disasters

59 Shook the peace of the gods.
Mahārāja! The sky and the stars
seemed to explode.
The cosmos seemed to disintegrate.

60 The earth shook
and seemed to be crumpling up.
Darkness shrouded the world.
Seeing this, Śaṅkara-Śiva,

61 Mahā-fortune-favoured Umā and the gods
were deeply disturbed.
In their confusion, they saw a blur
of clouds and rocks

62 Marching on them, armed with fearful weapons.
The army stood in front of them,
muttering
incomprehensible jargon,

63 And then, without warning,
it attacked Śaṅkara-Śiva and the gods,
shooting showers of arrows
from all sides.

64 Rocks, maces, clubs, fire-missiles,
prāsa, parighas,
rained on Śiva,
The god-army wavered and broke ranks,

65 And in a flash seemed to be
on verge of collapse.
Pressing with hordes,
cutting down soldiers, horses, elephants,

66 The Dānava anti-gods tore through
the gods' formations,
like a forest-fire through trees.
The gods fled;

67 Some fell, their heads severed
from their bodies.
Others ran helter-skelter,
with no one to save them.

68 Their heads were smashed to pulp,
bloody gashes showed on their bodies.
Bala-slayer Puraṁdara-Indra,
seeing them routed

69 By the Dānavas, tried to rally the gods,
shouting, "Heroes!
Do not fear! Victory is yours!
Rally and fight back!

70 Decide to be brave!
And your ill luck will vanish!
Then will you succeed in routing
these wicked Dānavas.

71 Try again! You will succeed!
Follow me and attack the mahā-antigods!
Hearing Śakra-Indra's words,
the gods recovered,

72 And, led by him, attacked the Dānava anti-gods.
Suddenly,
all the gods,
as well as the mahā-powerful Maruts,

73 And the illustrious Sādhyas
returned and rallied.
The countless arrows that they discharged
in volleys

74 Drank the blood of the anti-gods
and their horses and elephants.
The sharp arrows
sliced through their flesh,

75 And fell on the ground like snakes
tunnelling through ant-hills.
The Daitya anti-gods,
harassed by the celestial counter-attack,

76 Retreated in all directions, O rājā,
like black cloud masses.
Hemmed in by the god-armies,
the Dānava anti-god forces

77 Fell back in panic,
and fled from the arrow-showers.
The gods lifted their weapons
in joyous victory.

78 Celestial music played,
its sounds wafted on the field.
This was the great battle
so damaging to both sides.

79 The battlefield ran blood,
it was littered
with the bodies of gods and Dānava-antigods.
Then – a surprise!

80 The Dānava-antigods re-grouped
and once again launched
a massive assault on the gods.
Drums sounded, bugles blew.

81 The anti-god leaders roared
like lions.
Out of the terrifying anti-god ranks
came a mahā-powerful

82 Anti-god named Mahiṣa
with a pile of rocks in his hands,
like the sun emerging
from behind clouds.

83 O rājā! Seeing the massive rocks
about to be hurled at them,
the gods retreated. Mahiṣa pursued them
and hurled the rocks.

84 O lord of the earth! Ten thousand soldiers
of the gods were crushed
under those rocks; they fell,
and were reduced to pulp.

85 Mahiṣa's feat demoralised the gods;
he, with some other anti-gods,
attacked them
as a lion attacks deer.

86 When Indra and the other gods
saw Mahiṣa advancing towards them,
they dropped their weapons and flags,
and fled in fear.

87 Mahiṣa, infuriated, strode swiftly
towards Rudra-Śiva's chariot.
He seized one of its poles
and began pulling.

88 With the enraged Mahiṣa
straining at the pole,
the earth trembled and groaned,
and the mahā-ṛṣis fainted.

89 The cloud-huge anti-gods
began celebrating noisily,
thinking that they had won
a great victory.

90 Bhagavān Śiva refrained
from killing wicked-ātmaned Mahiṣa,
because he knew Skanda
would achieve that fame.

91 Fierce Mahiṣa, gloating over his success,
roared loudly;
the gods were alarmed,
and the Daitya anti-gods cheered.

92 Seeing the plight of the gods,
Mahāsena-Skanda rushed forward
blazing with anger,
incandescent like a second sun.

93 The strong-limbed deity
was dressed in red,
wore garlands of red flowers,
and golden armour.

94 He rode in a golden, sun-bright-chariot
pulled by chestnut horses.
Seeing him,
the anti-gods lost heart.

95 Mahā-powerful Skanda released, O Indra-among-rājās,
a fierce dazzling śakti-weapon
for the annihilation
of Mahiṣa.

96 It sped swiftly from his hand
and decapitated the anti-god.
Mahisa toppled
headless, dead.

97 His hill-huge head, sixteen *yojanas* long,
blocked the entrance
into the land
of the northern Kurus,

98 Though the Kurus had access outside.
Repeatedly hurling his śakti-spear
and slaughtering
thousands of enemies,

99 Skanda progressed,
witnessed by gods and Dānava-antigods.
The śakti returned to his hands.
Killing countless anti-gods,

100 Mahāsena-Skanda kept shooting arrows.
He cut his foes down;
his followers feasted on them
as they died in thousands,

101 The followers of Skanda
began to slaughter and devour
the anti-gods indiscriminately
till they were decimated.

102 Like the sun destroying darkness,
like fire a forest,
like wind the clouds,
mighty Skanda obliterated his enemies.

103 The gods came to honour him,
and he in turn honoured Maheśvara-Śiva.
Skanda blazed
with the sun's glory.

104 After the enemies of the gods had been routed,
and Maheśvara-Śiva had left,
Puraṁdara-Indra embraced Śkanda
and said to him:

105 "Skanda, super-excelling warrior,
Brahmā gave Mahiṣa a boon,
yet you could kill him.
Gods were like grass to him.

106 Mahā-muscled hero,
    you have removed a thorn
from the side of the gods
    by killing hundreds of Mahiṣa-brave anti-gods –

107 The enemies who never ceased
    to harass the gods.
Your followers have feasted
    on hundreds of Dānava-antigods.

108 Mighty deity! *Prabhu*!
You are as invincible
As the husband of Umā!
This victory is your first great feat!

109 Your fame will last for ever
In the three worlds.
Mahā-armed hero,
All the gods will pay you allegiance."

110 Saying this to Mahāsena-Skanda,
    the husband of Śacī, Indra,
with the permission of three-eyed Tryambaka-Śiva,
    left, accompanied by the gods.

111 Rudra-Śiva returned to Bhadravaṭa,
    and the gods to their abodes.
Siva said to them:
    "Respect Skanda as you respect me."

112 Agni's son Vahni-nandana Skanda killed the anti-gods,
    and conquered the three worlds
in a single day.
    Mahā-ṛṣis offer him pūjā.

113 Brahmins who read the story
    of the birth of Skanda
obtain prosperity in this world
    and his presence in the next.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-TWO

1 *Bhagavan,* revered one, mahātmā Brahmin,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"tell me the names by which Skanda
is known in the three worlds."

2 Asked by Yudhiṣṭhira (Vaiśampāyana continued),
bhagavān Vaiśampāyana of mahā-tapasyā
said to him
sitting among ṛṣis:

3 Āgneya, Skanda, Dīptakīrti, Anāmaya,
Mayūraketu, Dharmātmā, Bhūteśa,
Mahiṣa-mardana;

4 Kāmajit, Kāmada, Kānta, Satyavāk, Bhuvaneśvara,
Śiśu, Śighra, Śuci, Caṇḍa, Dīptavarṇa,
Śubhānana;

5 Amogha, Anagha, Raudra, Priya, Candrānana,
Diptaśakti, Praśāntāntātmā, Bhadrakṛt,
Kūṭamohana;

6 Śaṣṭhipriya, Dharmātmā, Pavitra, Matṛvatsala,
Kanyābhartā, Vibhakta, Svāheya, Revatisuta;

7 Prabhu, Netā, Viśākha, Naigameya, Suduścara,
Suvrata, Lalita, Bālakrīḍanakapriya;

8 Khacāri, Brahmacārī, Sūra, Śaravaṇodbhava,
Viśvāmitrapriya, Devasenāpriya;

9 Vāsudevapriya, Priyakṛt – are Kārtikeyā-Skanda's
divine names.
Whoever repeats them, gets fame, wealth,
and heaven.

10 O foremost of the Kauravas!
I will now sing the glory
of the matchless and mighty
six-faced Skanda,
god-and-ṛṣi honoured.
Listen to me carefully.

11 Skanda!
Devoed to Brahmā!
Begotten by Brahmā!
Knower of Brahmā!
Favoured of Brahmā!
Skanda!
Leader of Brahmins!
Lover of Brahmins!
Austere like Brahmins!
Skanda!

12 You are Svāhā!
You are Svadhā!
You are the purest of the pure!
Six-flamed fire
Invoked by the mantras!
You are the year!
You the six seasons!
You are the months and fortnights!
You are the sun's movements!
You are the cardinal points of the sky!

13 You have eyes like a lotus!
Your face is like a lotus!
You have one thousand faces!
You have one thousand arms!
You rule the universe!
You are the offering!
You the guardian of gods and anti-gods!

14 You are the general of armies!
Raging Fury! Pracaṇḍā!
Lord!
Master of all!
Conqueror of enemies! Śatrujetā!
Multiform!
Multi-blissful!
Multi-devourer!

15 Multi-legged!
You are the earth!
Multi-headed!
Multi-shaped!
Tremendously powerful!
O god,
Because you willed it,
You appeared as Gaṅgā's son,
As Svāhā,
As Earth,
As the son of the Kṛttikās!

16 Six-faced deity!
You play with roosters!
You become what you wish!
You are Dikṣā!
Soma!
The hosts of Maruts!
You are Dharma!
Vāyu!
O mountain-firm Indra!

17 Most eternal of eternals!
Lord of lords!
Possessor of the fierce bow!
Source of Truth!
Destroyer of Diti's son!
Conqueror of the enemies of the gods!

18 You are the subtlest tapasyā!
You are gigantic!
You are infinitesimal!
You know Dharma,
You know Kāma,
You know what is beyond Dharma and Kāma!
The worlds are radiant
With your glory, O mahātmā!

19 Lord of the universe!
I bow to you! Lord of the gods!
Namo' astu!
I have sung your glories
As best as I could.
Twelve-eyed and twelve-handed deity,
Accept my worship!
How can I ever know the essence of you?

20 The Brahmin who listens carefully
to this story
of the birth of Skanda,
and narrates it to other Brahmins,
or hears it narrated by Brahmins –
such a man

21 Obtains wealth, long life, fame, children, victory
over foes,
And prosperity, and attains the world of Skanda.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-THREE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: The mahātmā Pāṇḍavas
were relaxing with Brahmins
when Draupadi and Satyabhāmā
entered the ashram.

2 O Indra-among-rājās!
They were laughing and giggling;
they had met after a long time,
and they gossiped

3 Merrily about Kurus and Yadus
and their affairs.
Krishna's favourite wife,
slim-waisted Satyabhāmā,

4 Daughter of Satrajit,
said in private to Yājñasenī-Draupadī,
"Tell me,
how do you manage Pāṇḍu's sons?

5 They are strong and handsome
like the world-guardians.
Lovely lady, how are they so loyal,
and never irritated with you?

6 Eye-ravishing lady,
they are obedient to you,
and eager to do whatever you ask them.
Why? Tell me this.

7 Is it vows, tapasyā, drugs,
is it mantras of menstrual purification?
Special techniques? Sex-stimulating herbs?
magic *japa* formulae?
A homa? Collyrium?
Or any special cosmetic?

8 Tell me, princess of Pāñcālas,
about that auspicious device,
so that I may make Krishna
obedient to me."

9 Illustrious Satyabhāmā said this,
and suddenly fell silent.
Mahā-fortune-favoured, husband-devoted
Draupadi replied:

10 "Virtuous lady, your question should go
to not-quite-moral women.
How would I know
how these ladies operate?

11 You shouldn't ask me such questions,
or doubt a husband's faith.
You are intelligent,
you are Krishna's favourite wife.

12 When a husband discovers his wife
is using aphrodisiac roots and mantras,
he dreads her
as he would a snake in his bed.

13 How can fear bring peace of mind?
How can one without peace be happy?
A husband can never be made obedient
with the help of mantras.

14 I am told that ill-wishers transmit
    loathsome diseases,
sometimes even sending poison
    in the guise of a gift,

15 So that when the man swallows the powder
    or rubs it on his skin,
he is deprived instantly
    of his life.

16 Women have been known to spread
    dropsy and leprosy, feebleness,
impotence, idiocy, blindness and deafness
    with drugs.

17 These vicious women, following vicious ways,
    sometimes do irreparable harm
to their husbands.
    A wife must never do this.

18 Illustrious Satyabhāmā, let me tell you –
    and I will speak frankly –
how I behave
    with the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas.

19 Controlling my kāma, *ahaṁkāra*-selfishness
    and anger,
I serve the Pāṇḍavas and their wives
    with great devotion.

20 They love me, and I love them,
    and so I place my ātman in their ātman;
I feel no humiliation
    when I so serve my husbands.

21 I avoid mean and false speech;
    I avoid looking improperly,
sitting and walking carelessly –
    or glancing at strangers suggestively.

22 Pṛthā-Kuntī's mahā-chariot-hero sons are radiant
    like sun and fire, handsome like the moon –
they can kill enemies
    just by glancing at them.

23 Gods or men or gandharvas,
young, handsome, rich,
glittering with ornaments –
no, I do not get attracted to them.

24 I do not bathe or sleep or eat
till my husband has done so,
till our servants and followers
have bathed, eaten and slept.

25 I am always ready to greet my husband
with water and a seat,
when he returns from field, forest or town,
or when he wakes up.

26 I keep the house and household goods and food
organised and spotlessly clean.
I store rice,
and serve meals punctually.

27 I do not lose my temper,
I do not speak harshly,
I do not imitate loose women.
Never idle, always pleasant,

28 I laugh only when someone jokes,
I do not linger at the house-gate,
I do not take too long
to complete my morning ablutions,
I do not loiter
in pleasure-gardens.

29 I avoid breaking into loud laughter
or showing irritation,
I do not converse
with low-minded men,
I do not criticise others.
I just serve my husbands.

30 Separation from my husbands depresses me.
When my husbands
leave home
in order to call on relatives,

31 I refrain from using flowers
and fragrant unguents,
and I suppress my desires.
What my husband does not drink or eat,

32 What my husband does not enjoy –
is distasteful to me too.
Lovely-limbed lady,
guided by the advice given to me,

33 Decked in ornaments,
I always aim for the welfare of my husbands,
performing the dharma recommended
by my mother-in-law.

34 Alms-giving, sacrificial gifts, *śrāddha*-obsequies,
pitṛ-reverence,
boiling food on holy days for *pitṛs* and guests,
service of the deserving,

35 And all other dharmas that I know –
I discharge them conscientiously
day and night,
with humility, without delay.

36 I serve my husbands, who are gentle
and who follow truth and dharma.
I consider them
to be poisonous snakes
who can become roused
by the smallest slip.

37 My dharma is simple:
A wife's eternal duty
is to serve her husband.
He is her god, he is her refuge,
there is none other.
How can she act, contrary to his wishes?

38 Sleeping, eating, or adorning myself,
I never go against
my husband's wishes.
I never criticise my mother-in-law.

39 Fortunate lady, my husbands obey me
because I am hard-working and prompt,
because I humbly serve
my elders and superiors.

40 Every day I attend
with food and drink
upon respected and truthful Kuntī,
mother of these heroes.

41 I never put myself above her
regarding food, clothes, and ornaments.
I never criticise Pṛtha-Kuntī
who is as patient as the earth.

42 Eight thousand Brahmins
used to be fed daily
from plates of gold
in the place of Yudhiṣṭhira.

43 Eighty thousand *snātaka* Brahmins
of the domestic order
were entertained by Yudhiṣṭhira,
each given thirty maidservants.

44 Ten thousand semen-sublimating ascetics
were provided
pure, delicious meals
on magnificent golden plates.

45 I offered my pūjā-respect
to the Brahmin chanters of the Vedas
by providing food, drink and clothes,
after first dedicating a portion
as *agrahāra* gift
to the world-deity.

46 The mahātmā son of Kuntī, Yudhiṣṭhira
had one hundred thousand
exquisitely-dressed slave-girls
with gold bracelets and necklaces.

47 They wore expensive garlands
and used sandalwood perfume.
These gold-bedecked girls were adept
at singing and dancing

48 I knew each by face and name;
I knew what each preferred
to eat and wear,
and I knew each one's dislikes.

49 Kuntī's intelligent son also had
a hundred thousand slave-girls
who daily fed guests
from golden plates.

50 At the time that Yudhiṣṭhira lived
in Indraprastha,
he had a hundred thousand elephants
at his command.

51 Such was rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's glory.
And it was I
who listened to complaints,
and laid down rules to be observed.

52 I knew the entire palace system,
from the maidservants
and other palace workers,
to the palace cowherds and shepherds.

53 Auspicious and illustrious lady!
I was the one, not the Pāṇḍavas,
who knew the details
of income and expenditure;
I alone knew
their total revenue.

54 Lovely lady, giving me the responsibility
of feeding and caring
for those who needed it, the bull-brave Pāṇḍavas
paid court to me.

55 This load, which an ill-ātmaned person
would never accept,
I cheerfully took,
sacrificing my comforts day and night.

56 My husbands went about
their various pursuits,
and I managed their treasury,
as inexhaustible as Varuṇa's ocean.

57 Enduring hunger and thirst,
day and night I waited
on the Kaurava princes,
till night seemed day, and day night.

58 I was the first to wake up,
and the last to go to bed,
Satyabhāmā,
I have done this ever since.

59 This is the magic I have
to make my husbands
obedient to me.
I do not use the tricks
used by not-very-moral woman,
nor do I wish to use them."

60 Hearing Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's words of dharma,
Satyabhāmā expressed her deep reverence
for the dharma-following Pāñcāla princess,
and said:

61 "Princess of Pāñcāla, forgive me,
I was wrong, Yājñasenī.
Sometimes, among two loved-and-loving *sakhī*-friends
there is much pointless joking."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-FOUR

1 "Let me now tell you, dear *sakhī*,"
said Draupadī, "of ways
that are not deceitful
of holding a husband
or freeing him
from passionate women's clutches.

2 There is no god equal
to a husband, Satye.
If a husband is pleased,
all desires are met;
if a husband is displeased,
all are frustrated.

3 A husband gives offspring
and various other pleasures.
A husband gives beds
and cushions and robes,
garlands and perfumes,
fame and heaven.

4 It is not easy
in this world to be happy.
Chaste women specially
suffer the most.
Serve Krishna with love
and hardship, if need be.

5 Act in a manner –
offering cushions and garlands
and perfumes and service –
that pulls him to you,
making him think,
She truly loves me.

6 At the sound of his voice
near the gate of the house,
arise and be ready.
As soon as he enters,
offer him a seat,
and water for his feet.

7 Should he order a slave girl
to do him some service,
do it quickly yourself.
Let Krishna have the feeling
you love him with all
your ātman, O Satye.

8 Whatever he tells you,
even if not secret,
repeat it to no one;
if any of your co-wives
should mention it to him,
Vāsudeva-Krishna will resent it.

9 Strive always for his good,
feed all who are dear
and loyal to him.
Avoid the deceitful,
and all who wish ill,
or are trying to harm him.

10 Don't get frivolous
or careless with men.
Make silence your guideline.
Don't be alone too long
even with your sons
Pradyumna and Sāmba.

11 Be friendly with ladies
who are highborn and spotless
and loyal to their husbands;
shun women who drink,
who are nervous and gluttonous,
unstable and thievish.

12 Such is good conduct
which leads to prosperity.
It keeps away enemies,
and leads one to heaven.
Wear perfumes and ornaments
and revere your husband."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE

1 Janārdana-Krishna amicably discussed various matters
with Mārkaṇḍeya, the ṛṣis,
and the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas
(continued Vaiśampāyana),

2 And then, bidding them farewell,
Keśava-Krishna-climbed into his chariot.
Before doing so,
he called for Satyabhāmā.

3 Satyabhāmā embraced Draupadī
and said
affectionately to her,
signifying her warm feelings:

4 "Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, do not fear,
do not grieve.
Do not pass sleepless nights.
You will recover the earth again
with the prowess
of your god-like husband.

5 Dark-eyed beauty,
women who have your temperament
and your auspicious marks
can never suffer for long.

6 I have heard that you
and your husbands
surely will enjoy this earth
with unalloyed thorn-free pleasure.

7 Daughter of Drupada,
when Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons are routed
and vengeance fulfilled,
Yudhiṣṭhira with rule the world again.

8 And you will see the Kaurava wives
who, pride-possessed,
mocked you going into exile,
themselves hopeless and despairing.

9 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, rest assured that those
who scorned you in your distress
have already been consigned
to Yama's abode.

10 Your sons, Prativindhya by Yudhiṣṭhira,
Sutasoma by Bhīma,
Śrutakarman by Arjuna,
Śatānika by Nakula,

11 Śrutasoma by Sahadeva,
are all mighty warriors
and expert heroes –
they are all now in Dvārākā,

12 Passing their time happily
with Abhimanyu.
Subhadrā looks after them cheerfully,
as you yourself did.

13 Like you, she gives her whole heart
to them.
She is happy in their happiness,
sad in their sorrow.

14 Pradyumna's mother Rukmiṇī loves them similarly,
with all her ātman.
Keśava-Krishna, with Bhānu and other sons,
protects them affectionately.

15 My father-in-law gives them loving attention,
feeding and clothing them.
The Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis, including Balarāma,
love them.

16 Lovely lady, their love for your sons
is no less
than their love for Pradyumna."
Saying these sweet, sincere words,

17 Satyabhāmā proceeded to the chariot
of Vāsudeva-Krishna.
Before doing so, the wife of Krishna
half-circled Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī in *pradakṣiṇa*;

18 After which she climbed into the chariot.
Finest-of-the-Yadavas Śauri-Krishna
smiled at Draupadī;
he advised the Pāṇḍavas to return,
and sped towards his city
on his swift-horsed chariot.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-SIX

1 "Brahmin," said Janamejaya,
"exposed to the winter,
and the heat of summer,
to the wind and the sun,
what did the Pāṇḍavas do
in the forest?"

2 Arriving near the lake
(replied Vaiśampāyana),
they lived in seclusion,
roaming in the lovely
river-running valleys
and forests and mountains.

3 While they were staying there,
Veda-wise rich-in-tapasyā ascetics
would often pay them visits.
The excellent Pāṇḍavas
received the learned ṛṣis
with pūjā-respect.

4 One day it happened
that an eloquent Brahmin
paid them a visit.
He conversed for a while;
then he went to Vicitravīrya's son
king Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

5 The foremost of the Kauravas
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra received him
respectfully; he sat down;
asked by the monarch,
he talked about the sons
of Dharma, Anila-Vāyu, Indra, Aśvins,

6 Saying how the hardships
of wind and of sun
had reduced them to misery,
how Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī suffered
like one unprotected
though her husbands were heroes.

7 Listening to him,
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra experienced
the deepest anguish,
imagining that Draupadī
was drowning as if
in a river of sorrow.

8 His innermost ātman
was poignantly affected.
He trembled and sighed,
he struggled to be calm,
he thought himself responsible
for all this suffering.

9 "Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
eldest of my sons,
truthful and gentle,
who once slept on beds
of soft *raṅku*-deerskin,
now sleeps on the bare ground!

10 Magadhas and Sutas
and other musicians
woke him with songs
each morning – and now
he sleeps on the bare ground,
awakened by birds.

11 How is wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
able to sleep on the ground
exposed to the sun
and the wind, with Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
beside him, specially since
he was used to comforts?

12 And handsome Arjuna very likely
cannot sleep at all –
he could never bear discomfort.
Though obedient to Dharma's son,
he surely remembers
the injustices done him.

13 Arjuna must be tossing
sleepless and sighing
like an agitated snake
when he sees the twins
and Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīma
and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī in pain.

14 And the twins – handsome like gods
in heaven – must also
toss sleepless at night,
suffering undeservedly.
Only dharma and truth
stopped them from vengeance.

15 Vāyu's son Bhīma
equal to the wind-god
must also be sighing,
having to control
his anger – a promise
he made to Yudhiṣṭhira.

16 The greatest of warriors,
he lies on the bare ground.
Only dharma and truth
prevent him from killing
Duryodhana and others.
He is biding his time.

17 The jibes of Duḥśāsana
after the gambling defeat
of Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira
have pierced Vṛkodara-Bhīma's heart;
they burn him like straw
consuming dry sticks of wood.

18 Impossible for Dharma's son
Yudhiṣṭhira to act wrongfully.
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna obeys him.
But the anger of Bhīma
accelerates daily
like a wind-fanned fire.

19 Burning with anger,
he squeezes his palms,
he sighs fearfully,
as if to consume
my sons and grandsons
with the heat of his passion.

20 The Gāṇḍīva-wielder Arjuna
and Vṛkodara-Bhīma, when roused,
are like Antaka-Yama and Kāla.
Their arrows become thunderbolts,
they annihilate their enemies
on the field of battle.

21 Duryodhana and Śakuni,
Duḥśāsana and Karṇa,
by stealing the Pāṇḍavas'
kingdom by gambling,
saw only the honey,
and not the fall from the tree!

22 Doing good deeds or bad,
a man looks forward
to the fruits of his karma.
Seeking fruits, he is doomed.
How can such a man
ever attain mokṣa?

23 The land is tilled,
and the seed is sown,
and Indra sends rain,
yet the crops may not grow.
How could this happen
unless Destiny interferes?

24 Śakuni the gambler
did cheat Yudhiṣṭhira
who is honest and good.
Fondness for my sons
made me act similarly.
The Kauravas are doomed!

25 What will happen, will happen.
Urge it or not,
the wind must blow.
Pregnant woman must give birth.
Darkness will become morning,
and day become night.

26 All that we earn,
whether spent or not,
brings sorrow in the fullness
of time. Why such passion
for the earning of wealth?
All depends on fate.

27 The best we can do
is to guard our wealth,
that it may not diminish
little by little,
or squandered quickly,
or scattered indiscriminately.
Possessions get lost;
the only support
is the karma we do.

28 Consider Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's prowess!
He left the forest
for the abode of Śakra-Indra!
He succeeded in obtaining
the four divine weapons
and returned to earth.

29 Is there any man
who having got heaven
wishes to return?
But Arjuna has seen
the Kāla-doomed Kauravas,
and he has returned.

30 Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
is the bow-wielder;
the bow is the Gāṇḍīva;
the weapons divine;
who is there alive
to withstand these three?"

31 Subala's son Śakuni
heard this, and went
to Duryodhana and Karṇa,
unmindful of what he heard.
The foolish Duryodhana
was plunged into grief.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-SEVEN

1 Not too long after Śakuni heard Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
the moment he got a chance,
helped by Karṇa,
Śakuni said to Duryodhana:

2 "You exiled the Pāṇḍava heroes
through your prowess, O Bharata descendant,
and now you rule the earth alone,
like the slayer-of-Śambara Indra who rules heaven.

3 The whole earth, with its forests,
mountains, valleys,
gardens, and oceans
is now under your control, O rājā.

4 The rājās of east, west, north and south all come,
O king, ruler of men, to pay you homage.

5 O rājā! Radiant Lakṣmi, goddess of prosperity,
who once served the Pāṇḍavas,
now serves you
and your brothers.

6 O rājā! The splendour of Yudhiṣṭhira
that we witnessed earlier
in the city of Indraprastha
is now all yours.

7 O' Indra-among-rājās!
Your enemies have been reduced
to pitiful deprivation and misery.
With the brilliant power
of your intelligence,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira

8 Has been stripped of his glory,
O maha-muscled one,
which is now yours, O Indra-among-rājās,
O crusher of heroic foes. Rājās

9 Of the world now acknowledge
your greatness and supremacy
This sea-surrounded earth,
O rājā,

10 Her mountains, forests, towns, cities,
mines and woods and hills –
this devī, this goddess
is now in your hands.

11 There are countless mahā-powerful kingdoms
on this huge earth,
all of them with glittering flags,
with different forms of prosperity.

12 Respected by Brahmins, worshipped by kings,
shine, Duryodhana!
Shine like the sun in heaven!
O rājā! Be like a god!

13 Surrounded by the Kauravas
like Yama by the Rudras,
and Vāsava-Indra by the Maruts,
you shine like the moon among the planets.

14 Mahāraja! Let us go and see the destitute Pāṇḍavas
living in exile.
They refused to acknowledge
your authority.

15 Mahārāja, we have heard
that they are camped near a lake
in Dvaitavana-forest
with many Brahmins.

16 Go there radiantly prosperous, mahārāja,
and scorch the Pāṇḍavas,
like the sun that scorches everything
with its dazzling rays.

17 You were a king, they would not admit it;
you were prosperous, they denied it.
Now you are lord, they are nothing.
See them!

18 Let the Pāṇḍavas see you
like Yayāti, son of Nahuṣa,
with his countless followers,
all affluent and happy.

19 Only that prosperity is real prosperity,
O lord of the earth,
which impresses one's friends
as well as one's enemies.

20 What happiness is greater than,
being prosperous oneself,
to see one's enemy in adversity;
it is like a man on a hill-top
looking down at one
plodding below.

21 O tiger-among-kings! The happiness one gets
from seeing one's enemies struggling
is greater than the joy of getting
a son, wealth, or a kingdom.

22 What greater happiness can there be
for someone prosperous like you
than to see Dhanañjaya-Arjuna shuffling around
dressed in tree-bark?

23 Dress your wife in luxurious robes
and take her to greet
bark-and-skin-clad Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
and increase Draupadī's grief.

24 Let Draupadī bewail her lot
when she sees you wife richly decked.
Her misery then will exceed
her suffering in the sabhā."

25 O Janamejaya! Saying this to Duryodhana
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
both Śakuni and Karṇa lapsed
suddenly into silence.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-EIGHT

1 The words of Karṇa (Vaiśampāyana continued)
delighted rājā Duryodhana
But he suddenly became melancholy,
and said:

2 “Karṇa, what you have told me
has often occurred to me.
But I will not be allowed
to see the Pāṇḍavas.

3 Lord-of-the-earth Dhṛtarāṣṭra
feels too deeply for the brave Pāṇḍavas.
He thinks their tapasyā
has greatly enhanced their prowess.

4 If he gets to know
what our motives are,
I doubt he will give us permission
to go there.

5 After all, O mahā-radiant one, why should we want
to go to the forest of Davaita
unless it is to harass
the Pāṇḍavas.

6 You know what Kṣattā-Vidura said
to me, you, and Saubala-Śakuni
at the time
of the crucial dice-game.

7 When I recall that –
and the great public lamentation
the exile produced –
I cannot decide whether to go or not.

8 But nothing will give me greater pleasure
than to see
Bhīma and Phālguna-Aruna passing their days
suffering with Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

9 The joy of possessing the whole world
is nothing
compared to the joy of seeing Pāṇḍu's sons
wearing barks and skins.

10 Karṇa, tell me, what joy could exceed
that of seeing the daughter of Drupada
dressed in tatters
in the forest?

11 If Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīma
once see me radiantly prosperous,
the greatest desire of my life
will be fulfilled.

12 But I do not see
how I can work out a way
of getting lord-of-the-earth Dhṛtarāṣṭra's permission
to go to the forest.

13 Manage some clever way
with the help of Saubala-Śakuni
and Duḥśāsana
for us to go to the forest.

14 I will also today finally decide
whether to go or not –
and then I will meet
the king tomorrow.

15 When I am there tomorrow,
and finest-of-the-Kauravas Bhīṣma is also present,
come with Śakuni
and try out your ruse.

16 I will listen to what Bhīṣma
and my father
have to say before deciding –
specially what Grandcestor Bhīṣma says."

17 They agreed on this plan,
and retired to their mansions.
As soon as the night was over,
Karṇa came to rājā Duryodhana.

18 Karṇa smiled and said to him,
"I have hit upon a plan,
an excellent one.
Listen to me, O lord of men.

19 We have large herds of cattle
in Dvaitavana.
Let them serve as our excuse
for going there on a ghoṣa-yātrā.

20 O rājā! There is nothing wrong
in wanting to inspect our cattle.
This will get you
your father's permission."

21 While they were discussing
the cattle-ruse,
the rājā-of-Gāndhāra Śakuni smiled
and said:

22 "This was also the plan I had in mind.
Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
will grant permission;
he may even urge us to go there.

23 O lord of men! Our herds of cattle
are presently grazing in the Dvaita-forest.
Why shouldn't we go
to inspect them?"

24 They laughed uproariously
and patted each other's hands.
Of one mind,
they went to the Kaurava monarch.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-NINE

1 O Janamejaya! The approached rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and enquired after his welfare
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and he enquired after theirs.

2 A cowherd named Samaṅga
who had been instructed beforehand
came to Dhṛtarāṣṭra
regarding the cattle.

3 Rādhā's son Karṇa and Śakuni
said to the greatest of kings,
the mighty earth-ruler
Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

4 “O Kaurava descendant,
our cattle have been roaming
in a lovely forest.
It is time now to brand the calves.

5 This is also the perfect season
for your son Duryodhana
to go hunting.
Grant him permission.”

6 “*Tātā!* Child,” said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
“hunting and cattle-inspection
are worthwhile activities.
Herdsmen cannot be always trusted.

7 But I am told that the tigers-among-men Pāṇḍavas
are camped somewhere in that forest.
I think you should not personally
go there.

8 Deceived at dice, they sorrowfully pass their exile
in the mahā-forest.
Karṇa, those mahā-chariot-warriors
are engaged in tapasyā.

9 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira will not mind,
but Bhīma
is by nature excitable.
Yājñasenī-Draupadī is a radiant lady.

10 Your pride and brashness will give her offence;
I know this.
She has such tapasyā now
that she can scorch you.

11 Who knows – perhaps the Pāṇḍava heroes,
armed with swords, and other weapons,
will devastate you
with their prowess.

12 You may try to overwhelm them
by sheer force of numbers –
but that would be ignoble –
and I know you cannot succeed.

13 Mahā-muscled Dhanañjaya-Arjuna lived
for some time in the abode of Indra.
He returned to the forest
with celestial missiles.

14 Even when unskilled in weapons,
Arjuna conquered the earth.
Will not the skilled mahā-chariot-hero now
succeed in killing you all?

15 Assuming you go there and agree
to behave yourselves –
will that not make you restless,
knowing you were helpless?

16 It is quite possible
that some of your soldiers
may unknowingly harm Yudhiṣṭhira –
will not then the blame be yours?

17 Descendant of Bharata, send some trusted men
to brand the calves.
I do not think it right
that you go personally."

18 Śakuni said, "The eldest Pāṇḍava
is a man of dharma;
he vowed he would pass twelve years
in the forest.

19 The other Pāṇḍavas also follow dharma
and will obey him.
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
will not harm us.

20 We want very much to go
on a hunting expedition,
and to inspect the cattle;
we do not wish to meet the Pāṇḍavas.

21 We will stay away from the camp
of the Pāṇḍavas.
How can there be any misdemeanour
from our side?"

22 Listening to Śakunī's words,
lord-of-the-earth Dhṛtarāṣṭra
reluctantly gave permission
to Duryodhana and his followers.

23 With Dhṛtarāṣṭra's permission,
the finest-of-the-Bharatas
Gāndhari's son Duryodhana set out
with Karṇa and a large following.

24 He was accompanied by Duḥśāsana,
Subala's shrewd son Śakuni,
many of his brothers,
and countless women.

25 When mahā-muscled Duryodhana left
for the lake in the Dvaita-forest,
many citizens and their wives
followed him.

26 Eight thousand chariots,
thirty thousand elephants,
nine thousand horses,
and countless thousands of soldiers,

27 Carriages, shops, pavilions, traders, minstrels,
trained hunters,
in hundreds and thousands,
formed the retinue.

28 O lord of the earth!
The noise of all those thousands marching
resembled the mahā-roaring
of clouds in the monsoon.

29 They came to lake Dvaitavana,
all the followers and their belongings.
Rājā Duryodhana camped
about two *krośa*-shouts away.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FORTY

1 Rājā Duryodhana, crossing the forest,
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
came eventually to the cattle-grounds,
and camped there.

2 He chose a suitable tree-lined,
well-watered spot
with all conveniences,
and his servants constructed a house.

3 Near the royal residence,
they built separate houses
for Karṇa, Śakuni,
and the brothers of Duryodhana.

4 Duryodhana personally inspected
the hundreds of thousands of cattle,
examining their bodies,
and supervising their counting.

5 He had the calves branded,
and noted those that needed taming.
He counted the cows
with yet-unweaned calves.

6 Counting, and branding
of three-year old calves over,
the Kaurava king and his cow-experts
began roaming at pleasure.

7 The citizens and thousands of soldiers
accompanying king Duryodhana
enjoyed themselves in the forests
as if they were gods.

8 Cowherds skilled in dance and song
played musical instruments,
and glittering-ornamented cow-girls
entertained Duryodhana.

9 Surrounded by the palace ladies,
he cheerfully distributed
wealth and food and wine
to those who entertained him.

10 The king and his attendants
began hunting forest animals –
bison, buffalo, deer,
bear and boar.

11 Their arrows killed countless elephants
in that dense verdurous forest.
He ordered deer
to be trapped there.

12 Drinking milk, and enjoying the abundant wild fruits,
O Bharata descendant,
delighting in the entrancing sights
of wood and forest,

13 Where honey-drunk bees hummed,
and peacocks called piercing sweet,
the king finally came
to the sacred lake Dvaita.

14 Everywhere were bees
intoxicated with the honey of flowers;
and blue-throated birds; everywhere *vakula*,
punnāga and seven-leafed trees.

15 Duryodhana wandered there
with the dignity and grace
of thunder-hurling Mahendra-Indra.
Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Dharma,

16 Was engaged at that time
in the performance
of the *rājarṣi* yajña,
according to the rituals prescribed

17 By the learned Brahmins
who were with him;
acting as co-performer
was his wife-of-dharma Draupadī.

18 Duryodhana arrived there and ordered,
O Bharata descendant,
his followers to construct pleasure houses
without any delay.

19 They said, "It will be done",
and, commanded by the king,
proceeded to the banks of the lake
to build the houses.

20 No sooner had they arrived at the lake
than a host of gandharvas
rushed out and ordered them
to stop.

21 O lord of the earth!
The gandharva rājā and his followers
had arrived there from Kubera's realm
ahead of Duryodhana.

22 He came surrounded by apsarās
and the sons of the gods.
He wished to sport there,
and he forbade trespassing.

23 O rājā! Finding entrance forbidden
by the king of the gandharvas,
the royal attendants returned
to Duryodhana's camp

24 Duryodhana immediately despatched
a contingent of crack invincible soldiers
with orders to dislodge
the gandharvas.

25 These soldiers, representing the finest units
of the Kauravas,
marched to the lake of Dvaitavana,
and announced to the gandharvas:

26 "The powerful rājā Duryodhana,
son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
has come here for sport.
Vacate this area at once!"

27 The gandharvas heard, and laughed out loudly.
O lord of the earth!
They retorted with these hard words,
saying:

28 “Your rājā Suyodhana-Duryodhana is a fool.
Who but a fool
would dare treat heaven-dwellers
as if they were his servants?

29 You are all fools to rush here
to meet your death.
What idiocy possessed you
to bring this message to us?

30 Go, hurry back to where the Kaurava rājā is;
otherwise, you will die;
consider today as the time of your entering
the realm of Dharma-rāja Yama.”

31 When the soldiers heard this,
they sped back to the camp
where the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
rājā Duryodhana was resting.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FORTY-ONE

1 Mahārāja! They hurried back (Vaiśampāyana said)
to Duryodhana,
and reported to the Kaurava prince
all they had heard.

2 Concluding that the gandharvas
had insulted his soldiers,
the brave son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra angrily
rebuked them:

3 “Go! Even if Śatakratu-Indra is with them,
go and thrash
these dharma-less rascals who dare
affront me!”

4 Duryodhana’s words inspired
the mahā-powerful sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and thousands of soldiers
to prepare for massive battle.

5 They filled all the ten directions
with their fearful lion-like roars,
and moved in a massive show of force
into the forest.

6 O ruler of the earth! The gandharvas once more
asked them to stop.
They ignored the warning
of the gandharvas,

7 And, without caring for consequences,
plunged inside the forest.
When Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son refused
to restrain his soldiers,

8 The sky-ranging gandharvas went
and informed Citrasena.
The gandharva rājā was furious,
and commanded his followers:

9 "Punish them! Punish the scoundrels!"
Ordered by Citrasena,
the chief of the gandharvas,
the gandharva army

10 Charged at the Kaurava contingent.
Seeing the gandharvas
swarming at them with brandished weapons,
the Kaurava soldiers

11 Broke ranks and scattered helter-skelter.
While the heroes
of the Kauravas were flying in terror
from the gandharvas,

12 Karṇa, the brave son of Rādhā,
alone stood firm.
He saw the gandharva soldiers
rushing at him,

13 And he stopped them
with a heavy shower of arrows.
His superb dexterity used spears,
darts and swords,

14 And weapons of bone and steel,
to slice off the heads
of thousands of gandharvas;
the mahā chariot-hero Karṇa

15 Made Citrasena's warriors howl in pain.
Though their ranks
were decimated by that intelligent son
of a charioteer,

16 The gandharvas rallied
and counter-attacked in thousands;
it seemed as if the earth
was a seething mass of gandharvas.

17 Rājā Duryodhana and Subala's son Śakuni,
and Duḥśāsana,
Vikarṇa, and all the others sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra

18 Came charging in chariots
whose wheels screeched and roared
like the screaming
of the bird-god Garuda.

19 They followed the leadership of Karṇa,
and returned repeatedly
to attack,
intending to support Karṇa.

20 Thousands of gandharvas fell.
But the chariots and horses
of the gandharvas
re-grouped and charged again.

21 It was a fearful, horripilating battle.
For a while
it seemed the arrows of the Kauravas
had repulsed the gandharvas.

22 Seeing the gandharvas waver,
the Kaurava forces
sent up loud victory cries.
Citrasena leapt into his chariot,

23 And angrily plunged into the Kauravas,
with the intention of wiping them out
That great hero resorted
to his weapons of māya
which rendered
the Kaurava soldiers senseless.

24 It seemed, O descendant of Bharata,
that every Kaurava soldier
was hemmed in and crushed
by at least ten gandharvas.

25 O rājā! This was too much for the Kauravas.
They panicked,
and those that wanted to live
dropped their weapons and fled.

26 Then the rest lost heart, and soon
the Kaurava army was in total rout.
Only Karṇa, Vikartana's son,
stood hill-firm, O rājā.

27 Duryodhana, Karṇa,
and Subala's son Śakuni
continued fighting the gandharvas
in spite of being severely wounded.

28 The gandharvas, intending to kill Karṇa,
grouped into a massive force
and rushed him
in hundreds and thousands.

29 Employing a strategy to kill him,
the mahā-powerful gandharva heroes
circled him with swords, maces,
spears and battle-axes.

30 Some shattered the axle of his chariot;
others sliced his flagstaff, others its poles;
others attacked
his horses and charioteer.

31 Thousands of gandharvas!
Some shredded his chariot-canopy,
some the *varūtha*-hub, some the joints,
till the vehicle was a total wreck.

32 The charioteer's son Karṇa leapt out,
brandishing sword and shield.
He jumped into Vikarṇa's chariot
and, whipping fiercely the horses,
galloped out of the field
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FORTY-TWO

1 Seeing the mahā chariot-hero Karṇa
flee the battlefield,
the soldiers of Duryodhana's army
were demoralised.

2 Mahārāja Duryodhana saw his soldiers scattering
before his very eyes,
but he refused to panic
and stood firm.

3 He absorbed the impact
of the gandharva army's attack,
and released on them
a mahā arrow-shower.

4 The gandharvas repulsed his assault,
and, eager to kill Duryodhana,
manoeuvred so as to surround
his chariot.

5 Their arrows pierced the axle, shaft,
fenders, flagstaff,
the triple-bamboo-canopy, the turret,
the horses and charioteer.

6 Chariotless, Duryodhana fell.
Mahā-muscled Citrasena jumped on him,
and seized him so tightly
he seemed to be throttled to death.

7 O Indra-among-rājās!
In this way they captured Duryodhana;
next they rushed on Duḥśāsana's chariot,
and took him prisoner.

8 Some seized Vivimśati, other Citrasena;
some captured Vinda and Anuvinda;
others surrounded the royal ladies
in the camp.

9 Those soldiers of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana
who managed to escape
from the gandharvas scurried for safety
to the Pāṇḍavas.

10 With Duryodhana taken prisoner,
the vehicles, shops,
pavilions, and prostitutes were placed
in charge of the Pāṇḍavas

11 By Duryodhana's soldiers who pleaded:
"Handsome, mahā-muscled and mahā-powerful
rājā Duryodhana is the gandharva's captive.
O Pāṇḍavas, save him!

12 Duḥśāsana, Durviṣaha, Durmukha
and Durjaya
are chained as prisoners,
along with the royal ladies."

13 Wailing, stricken with humiliation and grief,
Duryodhana's followers
approached Yudhiṣṭhira
to plead for their king.

14 To the grieving and humiliated
elderly advisers of Duryodhana
who came entreating Yudhiṣṭhira protection,
Bhīma said:

15 "What we should have done
on the battlefield
with the help of horses and elephants,
has been done by the gandharvas.

16 Those that came here for other purposes
have been overtaken by unpredictable fate.
This is the result
of rājā Duryodhana's deceitful dice-game.

17 We have heard it said
that the enemy of a coward
gets overthrown by brave others.
We saw the gandharvas do this today.

18 Good that there is at least
someone in this world
who wishes us well,
and takes our load on his shoulders.

19 This ill-minded scoundrel came to visit us,
no doubt – he prosperous,
and we pathetic and exposed to wind,
cold and heat.

20 And those who supported the deeds
of the adharma-following
ill-ātmaned Duryodhana now see him
captured and disgraced.

21 Whoever advised Duryodhana to mock the Pāṇḍavas,
did wrong.
The Pāṇḍavas, I assure you,
are not the wrong-doers."

22 When Bhīma continued to speak
with sarcasm,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira interrupted him:
"This is no time for bitter words."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FORTY-THREE

1 "Child, *tāta,* why do you speak harshly,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira
"to these harassed Kauravas
who have come seeking protection?

2 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara Bhīma,
there will always be family quarrels,
but that does not mean that family dharma
should be discarded.

3 And if an outsider aims to sully
the honour of a family,
those with dignity will never tolerate
such misbehaviour.

4 We are one hundred and five brothers
when strangers attack us,
though we may be split into a hundred Kauravas
and five Pāṇḍavas.

5 The wrong-minded gandharva chief
knew we were living here,
yet he went and did something
that displeases us.

6 The imprisonment of Duryodhana
and the violence shown
to our family's ladies by a stranger,
insult our family honour.

7 O tiger-among-men,
go and arm yourself immediately
to rescue those who seek our shelter.
Redeem family honour!

8 Arjuna and the twins and you,
who all have tiger-like courage and strength –
go and rescue Suyodhana-Duryodhana
from captivity.

9 O tigers-among-men! These radiant chariots
with Duryodhana's golden flagstaffs
are ready for your use.
Take them.

10 Take Indrasena and other charioteers
who are expert in war,
and drive these splendid,
furious-noised chariots.

11 Drive them into the gandharva ranks
and battle your very best
to rescue Suyodhana-Duryodhana
from the gandharvas.

12 Even the lowliest Kṣatriya would gladly offer protection
to one who seeks it.
And you are wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma –
what can I say?"

13 Bhīma heard Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira speak
in this manner, and,
remembering his vow of revenge, he replied,
his eyes burning with anger:

14 "Brave brother Yudhiṣṭhira!
Remember how this wicked Duryodhana plotted
to burn us alive in the lac house,
and fate saved us.

15 Lord of the Bharata race!
This is the same Duryodhana
who gave me *kālakūṭa* poison and flung me trussed
in the Gaṅgā.

16 Kuntī's son! This is the same Duryodhana
who laid hands on Draupadī,
who ordered her dragged by her hair
in the sabhā,

17 Who tried to strip her naked.
This is the same Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
and he is reaping the fruits
of his wickedness.

18 It should be our duty
to catch and punish him.
Our work has been done for us
by helpful friends, O rājā.
Why are you worried?
The gandharvas have helped us."

19 About this time (said Vaiśampāyana),
Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
imprisoned by the force of gandharvas,
began loudly lamenting:

20 "Upholders of the glory of the Kauravas!
Best of men of dharma!
The gandharvas are dragging me away.
Save me, O mahā-famed Yudhiṣṭhira!

21 O mahā-muscled one! They are dragging away
your own brother Duryodhana –
and Duḥśāsana, Durviṣaha,
Durmukha and Durjaya.

22 All our queens have been captured
and insulted!
O finest-of-men Puruṣottama-Pāṇḍavas,
pursue them and rescue me!

23 O mahā-muscled Vṛkodara-Bhīma
and mahā-glory-laden Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
Save me! Let the twins also rush to help me
with their weapons!

24 This is an indelible blot on the honour
of the Kauravas!
Muster the prowess you have
and scatter the gandharvas!"

25 When Yudhiṣṭhira heard these wails
of the suffering Kaurava Duryodhana,
he was moved to pity,
and said to Bhīma:

26 "What man is there in this world who,
begged even by his enemy,
'Help me! Save me!' with palms folded in *prāñjali,*
will not go to his aid?

27 Receiving a boon, enjoying authority,
becoming father of a son, –
all three bring great joy.
Listen, Pāṇḍavas! To rescue an enemy
from a terrible plight is joy equalling
the collective joy of these three.

28 What could be greater joy for you
than to see Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
who sought your life,
now supplicating for his own?

29 If I were not busy with the yajña,
O wolf-waisted hero, Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
I would personally have rushed
to rescue him.

30 So, Bhīma, O finest of the Kauravas,
try everything in your power
to save Suyodhana-Duryodhana
by amicable means.

31 But if the gandharva chief is not open
to sweet conciliation,
then try to rescue Duryodhana
with the least violence.

32 If the gandharvas are still unwilling,
then, O Bhīma,
use everything you have to crush them,
and save Duryodhana.

33 That is all I can say because my yajña;
O wolf-waisted Vṛkodara Bhīma,
has begun;
I must now complete it."

34 Hearing these words of invincible Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
treated them as a guru's command
and vowed to rescue Duryodhana.

35 Arjuna said, "If the gandharvas
do not peacefully release
the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
the earth will drink gandharva blood."

36 O rājā! When the Kauravas heard Arjuna
make this vow,
they rejoiced, because they knew
he was true to his word.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR

1 Inspired by the words of Yudhiṣṭhira,
the bull-brave warriors
led by Bhima rose up joyfully
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

2 O descendant of Bharata,
the mahā-chariot-heroes immediately
put on their impenetrable
gold-decorated armour.

3 They collected all kinds of divine weapons
Armed,
they climbed into their flagstaffed chariots,
brandishing bows and arrows.

4 The Pāṇḍavas seemed to glow
like so many glorious fires.
The chariots were pulled
by incredibly swift horses

5 Which reached the gandharva camp
in no time.
The soldiers of the Kauravas
began shouting fiercely,

6 When they saw the Pāṇḍavas mahā-chariot-warriors
march out.
The sky-ranging gandharva mahā-chariot-heroes,
flushed with success,

7 Saw the Pāṇḍavas approach,
and stood confronting them in the forest.
The gandharvas swung back
and faced the Pāṇḍavas.

8 They saw the four Pāṇḍavas looking
like the four Lokapāla world-guardians,
shining with the lustre
of the world-guardians.

9 The Gandhamādana-dwelling gandharvas,
enraged, stood firm in battle formation.
As Dharma's son, the intelligent rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
had instructed,

10 The battle that took place was nothing
but a skirmish, O Bharata descendant.
But the little-thinking soldiers
of the gandharva rājā

11 Were so unintelligent that foe-scorcher
Savyasācī-Arjuna realised a small skirmish
would not be enough to make them
surrender their prisoners.

12 He shouted to the sky-wanderers
these conciliatory words:
"Release my brother,
rājā Suyodhana-Duryodhana!"

13 They listened to his terms
and they guffawed.
Laughing at illustrious Arjuna's suggestion,
the gandharvas countered:

14 "Little one, *tāta,* there is only one person
whom we obey,
for under his rule we spend our lives
free from troubles.

15 There is none else – none except him,
O Bharata descendant –
we obey. But when he orders,
we follow that lord of the gods."

16 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna listened
to the gandharvas' words;
Kuntī's son Arjuna made the following reply
to the gandharvas:

17 "It is shameful for the gandharva rājā
to stoop to insulting others' wives
and to do battle
with mere mortals.

18 Release all of them,
all the mahā-brave sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
Release all the ladies –
because Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira orders it.

19 Gandharvas, if you refuse to free
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons voluntarily,
you leave me no choice but to use force
to free Suyodhana-Duryodhana."

20 Saying this, Pṛthā-Kuntī's son,
ambidexterous Savyasācī Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
fired a volley of sky-piercing arrows
at the sky-rangers.

21 The powerful gandharvas stormed at him
in a body
and shot a counter-volley of arrows.
The Pāṇḍavas retaliated.

22 O descendant of Bharata, a horrendous battle
was the outcome of the clash
between the dynamic gandharvas
and the reckless Pāṇḍavas.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FORTY-FIVE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: The golden-garlanded,
celestial-weaponed gandharvas
shot fire-tipped arrows,
and completely encircled the Pāṇḍavas

2 There were only the four heroic Pāṇḍavas,
but the gandharvas were in thousands.
The battle was a remarkable one,
O rājā.

3 The gandharvas tried isolating and destroying
the chariots of the Pāṇḍavas,
exactly as they did with Karṇa
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

4 O rājā! The tigers-among-men Pāṇḍavas
released shower after shower of arrows
at the thousands upon thousands
of attackers.

5 So powerful was the volley of arrows
that the mighty sky-ranging gandharvas
could come nowhere near
the Pāṇḍavas.

6 Infuriated Arjuna took careful aim
and hurled his divine mahā-weapons
into the ranks
of the charging gandharvas.

7 Using his fire-missile, the Āgneya,
enormously powerful Arjuna
despatched hundreds of thousands of gandharvas
to the abode of Yama.

8 Bhīma, the mahā-archer,
strongest of strong men,
killed thousands of gandharvas
with his sharp arrows.

9 Mādrī's twin sons,
fighting with consummate prowess,
targeted hundreds of gandharvas
and slaughtered them all.

10 Routed by the mahā-chariot-heroes,
the remaining gandharvas
rose swiftly to the skies,
taking with them Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

11 But Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
anticipating their escape into the sky,
intercepted and covered their flight
with a thick net of arrows.

12 Trapped in the arrow-net
like birds in a cage,
the gandharvas indignantly flung maces,
spears and swords

13 At Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, but he was expert enough
to neutralise them.
Then he fired a volley of limb-shredding
crescent-shaped *bhalla*-arrows.

14 Heads, legs, and arms
plummeted from the sky
like a shower of stones,
and the gandharvas trembled in fear.

15 But even as mahā-ātmaned Arjuna
continued to harass them,
the gandharvas fired a counter-volley of weapons
on Arjuna below.

16 Foe-punishing, mightily powerful
and ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
blocked their volley
and began an even fiercer assault.

17 Arjuna, delighter of the Kauravas,
decided to shoot his famous weapons –
the Sthūnākarṇ a, Indrajāla, Saura,
Āgneya and Samyas

18 The gandharvas, harassed by these weapons,
suffered heavy casualties
as the Daitya-anti-gods did
when attacked by Śakra-Indra.

19 Their attempts at attack from the sky were foiled
by Savyasācī-Arjuna's arrow-net;
his *bhalla*-shafts repulsed their attacks
on the earth.

20 O descendant of Bharata, seeing Kuntī's son Arjuna
making short work of the gandharvas,
Citrasena lifted a mace
and rushed at the ambidexterous hero.

21 Pārtha-Arjuna took aim at the advancing figure,
and splintered the iron mace
into seven fragments
with his arrows.

22 Citrasena saw his mace shatter
under the impact
of energetic Arjuna's arrows, and resorted
to his powers of concealment.

23 But Arjuna with his celestial missiles
succeeded in disintegrating
all the celestial weapons that Citrasena
was able to muster.

24 When the powerful gandharva rājā realised
that his weapons were ineffectual
against mahātmā Arjuna's,
he used his māyā of invisibility.

25 When the sky-ranging chief began shooting
from an invisible vantage point,
Arjuna charged his weapons
with special mantras,

26 And, assuming various shapes,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna was able,
by using the aiming-by-sound Śabdaveda-weapon,
to prevent his foe from vanishing.

27 Pinned down by the marvellous missiles
of mahātmā Arjuna,
his loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend
the gandharva chief appeared before him.

28 Citrasena said to him: "Look,
your own *sakhā*-friend
is fighting you."
Seeing his friend losing the battle,

29 Arjuna retracted his missiles.
The Pāṇḍavas, seeing Dhanañjaya Arjuna
summon back his weapons,
reined in their horses, stopped their chariots,

30 And withdrew their bows.
Citrasena, the Pāṇḍava warrior,
Bhīma, Savyasācī-Arjuna and the twins
enquired about each other's welfare,
and sat completely still
in their respective chariots.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FORTY-SIX

1 The mahā-radiant bowman Arjuna smiled
and said to Citrasena
who was standing surrounded
by all the gandharva soldiers:

2 "What can be your purpose, O hero,
in wanting to humiliate the Kauravas?
Why insult Suyodhana-Duryodhana
and the wives?"

3 Citrasena replied, "Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
 I knew beforehand the intentions
of ill-ātmaned Duryodhana and wicked Karṇa
 for coming here.

4 Precisely this – knowing you Pāṇḍavas were alone,
 and in adversity,
he wanted to show off his prosperity
 against your misfortune.

5 They came here with the intention
 of insulting you and Draupadī.
Knowing this, lord-of-the-gods Indra
 said to me:

6 'Go, bring Duryodhana captive before me,
 along with his advisers.
And protect Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
 and his brothers.

7 Pāṇḍava Arjuna is your *sakhā*-friend
 and also your disciple.'
Because the rājā of the gods instructed me,
 I rushed here.

8 Ill-ātmaned Duryodhana
 has been made captive.
I will now take him to the realm
 of Pāka-slaying Indra."

9 "Citrasena," said Arjuna,
 "if you wish to please me,
obey Yudhiṣṭhira and free Suyodhana-Duryodhana.
 He is our cousin-brother."

10 "Dhanañjaya-Arjuna! This wicked character,"
 Citrasena said, "thinks no end of himself.
He should not be freed. He deceived
 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

11 Kuntī's son Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira has no idea
 of what brought this scoundrel here.
Let him look at the facts –
 and then decide."

12 All of them (continued Vaiśampāyana)
hurried to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and supplied him
with all the details.

13 Never-defeated Ajātasatru-Yudhiṣṭhira
patiently heard the gandharva,
praised him, and ordered the prisoners
to be set free.

14 "We are grateful," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"that, in spite of your prowess,
you spared the lives of Duryodhana
and his relatives.

15 *Tāta!* Dear friend! I am touched by this gracious act
of the gandharvas.
By freeing ill ātmaned Duryodhana,
you have saved our family from dishonour.

16 I am happy to see you.
What would you like from me?
Take what you wish,
and return to your abode."

17 The gandharvas were pleased with the words
of the highly intelligent son of Pāṇḍu, Yudhiṣṭhira.
They left,
led by Citrasena and the apsarās.

18 Followed by the gandharvas,
Citrasena reached Śatakratu-Indra's heaven
and faithfully reported the events
that had occurred.

19 The rājā of the gods showered
the nectar of immortality
and resurrected the gandharvas who had died
at the hands of the Kauravas.

20 The Pāṇḍavas also rejoiced
at their wonderful feat
of rescuing all their relatives,
along with the royal ladies.

21 The mahātmā mahā-chariot-heroes,
offered pūjā-homage by the Kauravas,
their sons and wives,
blazed splendidly like so many yajña-fires.

22 Yudhiṣṭhira, speaking gently and with affection,
said to Duryodhana,
now freed
along with all his brothers:

23 "*Tāta!* My friend! Descendant of Bharata,
never again decide to behave so rashly.
A reckless man
has no peace of mind.

24 O Kaurava prince,
may you and all your brothers prosper.
Cast off your gloom,
and feel free to return home."

25 Receiving Yudhiṣṭhira's permission,
rājā Duryodhana did *praṇāma*
before the son of Dharma.
He was filled with deep shame.

26 He looked hearbroken.
He left for his capital like one lifeless.
After he had left,
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira

27 And his brothers were offered pūjā-respect
by the Brahmins.
He lived like Śakra-Indra,
surrounded by these tapasyā-rich ascetics,

28 Passing his days happily
In the forest of Dvaitavana.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FORTY-SEVEN

1 Janamejaya said: "After his capture by his enemies,
and his rescue
by the mahātmā sons of Pāṇḍu
who were so skilled in arms,

2 Duryodhana, who was always
so contemptuous
of the Pāṇḍavas
and proud of his own superiority,

3 Pompous, wicked, insulting
and mean-minded Duryodhana –
did he not find entering Hastināpura
most humilating?

4 Give me all the details, Vaiśampāyana,"
said Janamejaya,
"of how that ashamed and humbled king
entered his capital."

5 Given leave by Yudhiṣṭhira to go,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son, Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
head bent and grief-stricken, slowly left
(replied Vaiśampāyana).

6 Duryodhana, with his four-fold army,
returned to his capital;
his heart was sad,
his mind immersed in his defeat.

7 He halted his chariots near a site
green with grass
and well-supplied with water,
and pitched temporary camp there.

8 With his elephants, chariots, horses
all around him,
the rājā sat on a high bed
that dazzled like fire,

9 And he on it looked like the moon in eclipse,
devoured by Rāhu.
Late at night, Karṇa came to him
and said:

10 "Son of Gāndhārī, we are fortunate
that you are alive.
I am fortunate to meet you
once again.
You have luckily defeated
the any-form-assuming gandharvas.

11 O delighter of the Kauravas! I must be fortunate indeed
to be able to see
all your mahā-chariot-hero brothers
victorious in battle.

12 Unable to withstand the charge
of the gandharvas,
I had to retreat.
I thought flight the best plan,

13 Because my body was pierced with arrows.
I had to leave,
for they were superior in prowess
and in numbers.

14 But I am unable to believe
that you, your soldiers,
wives, and chariots have emerged unscathed
from that fierce battle.

15 Mahārāja! Descendant of Bharata!
None else in this world
can achieve what you and your brothers
have accomplished today."

16 O rājā! Rājā Duryodhana listened to Karṇa
(said Vaiśampāyana),
and replied to the rājā of Aṇga
in a tear-choked voice.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FORTY-EIGHT

1 "Son of Rādhā," said Duryodhana,
"you do not know
what happened, so your words
do not hurt me.
You have the impression that my prowess
overran the gandharvas.

2 O mahā-muscled hero, my brothers fought
by my side for a long time.
The casualties were heavy
on both sides.

3 But when the sky-ranging heroes
began employing māyā against us,
the battle tipped
in their favour.

4 We were defeated, and all of us –
attendants, advisers,
children, wives, soldiers and chariot-warriors –
were made prisoners.

5 Shame overcame us as they paraded us
in the sky.
Some of our soldiers, advisers,
and mahā-chariot-heroes

6 Went to the Pāṇḍavas
who never refuse help when asked,
and said to hem: 'Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
rājā Duryodhana and his brothers,

7 His counsellors and the palace-ladies
are now prisoners
of the sky-ranging gandharvas.
Rescue the king and his wives!

8 Do not allow the Kaurava ladies
to be humiliated.'
Beseeched in this way, the eldest Pāṇḍava,
a true dharmātmā,

9 Persuaded the other Pāṇḍavas
to come to our rescue.
The bull-brave Pāṇḍavas rushed
to the spot,

10 Overtook the gandharvas
and asked them to release us.
They could have used force,
but those mahā-chariot-heroes spoke gently.

11 The gentleness was rejected
by the gandharvas,
so powerful Bhīma,
Arjuna and the twins
released a tremendous shower of arrows
on the sky-rangers.

12 The sky-wanderers wavered and fled
in the regions of space,
dragging us joyfully
behind them.

13 And then we saw Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
fire superhuman missiles
and spread a net of arrows
on the fleeing gandharvas.

14 When he saw his forces trapped
in that net of sharp arrows,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's *sakhā*-friend
the gandharva chief

15 Citrasena appeared; he and Pāṇḍavas Arjuna
wished each other's welfare.
He also enquired about the other Pāṇḍavas;
they reciprocated.

16 They threw aside their armours
and mixed
with the friendliest of spirits.
Citrasena and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
offered each other
the highest pūjā-respect."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FORTY-NINE

1 "Arjuna, destroyer of his heroic enemies,
approached Citrasena,"
Duryodhana went on, "smiled,
and said these brave words:

2 'Hero, great gandharva,
release my cousin-brothers.
They cannot be insulted
so long as the Pāṇḍavas are alive.'

3 Karṇa, when Pāṇḍu's mahātmā son
said this,
the gandharva told him of the motives
that brought us there –

4 Saying we had come only to mock
the Pāṇḍavas and their wife.
As the gandharva
unfolded our plan,

5 I felt so ashamed that I hoped
the earth would swallow me.
The gandharva and the Pāṇḍavas
went to Yudhiṣṭhira

6 And, disclosing our plan to him,
handed us over, still tied, to him.
In front of the ladies,
trussed up by enemies,

7 And offered as a present to Yudhiṣṭhira,
completely in the clutches of our enemies –
what greater shame
could be mine than this?

8 That I should have persecuted them!
And then, to be freed
by the ones I persecuted!
Scoundrel I, owing them my life!

9 Better that I should have died on the battlefied!
Better that than live like this!
Death at the gandharva's hands
would have brought me fame!

10 The heaven of Mahendra-Indra
would have been mine!
O bull-brave hero, listen now carefully
to what I propose to do.

11 I will stay here and fast.
You can return.
My brothers also should return
to their capital Hastināpura.

12 Let all my friends, including you,
Karṇa, led by Duḥśāsana,
and all my relatives,
return to Hastināpura.

13 I will never return to my city
in my insulted state.
My enemies feared me,
and my friends respected me –

14 And now I am sorrow to my friends
and joy to my foes.
If I return to Hastināpura,
what will I tell my father?

15 What will Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
Vidura, Sañjaya, Bāhlika, Somadatta's son,
the noble chiefs,

16 Brahmins, the leaders of the various
professions and trades,
what will they think of me? –
and what excuse do I have for them?

17 In the past I saw over the heads
of my enemies,
I trampled on their chests;
now, fallen, what will I say?

18 Pride bloated me.
I was like an insolent man, who,
though possessing power, knowledge and wealth,
is doomed to fall.

19 Aho! My foolishness drove me
to this cruel and wicked deed,
and this misery
is the fruit.

20 I will fast to death,
I refuse to live.
How can a hero want to live,
rescued by his own enemy?

21 They laughed at me, who am proud,
thinking me a coward!
The prowess-proud Pāṇḍavas saw me
deprived of all dignity!"

22 Duryodhana continued to express his grief;
(continued Vaiśampāyana);
he said to Duḥśāsana:
"Duḥśāsana, great Bharata, listen to me.

23 I turn over my sovereign power to you
Be king!
Protected by Karṇa and Subala's son Śakuni,
rule the earth.

24 As Vṛtra-slaying Indra cherishes the Maruts,
so should you cherish your brothers.
Let friends and relatives trust you
as the gods trust Śatakratu-Indra.

25 Always be generous to Brahmins;
give them wealth.
Always be the refuge and support
of friends and relatives.

26 Protect your less privileged relatives,
as Viṣṇu protects the gods.
Always obey your guru-elders.
Go, rule the earth.

27 Make your friends happy;
be the scourge of your enemies."
Duryodhana put his arms round Duḥśāsana's neck,
and said, "Go."

28 Duḥśāsana heard this,
and his heart brimmed with feeling.
Tears choking him, he folded his hands,
and did *añjali* before his eldest brother;

29 Then, with bent head and hoarse voice,
he said, "Do not say so."
He fell on the ground
in his great grief.

30 A grief so deep that tiger-among-men Duḥśāsana
burst into fresh tears
at the feet of his brother, saying,
"This cannot be.

31 The earth will shatter
The skies fall
The sun lose radiance
The moon her lambent softness

32 The winds lose speed
The Himālayas shift
The oceans dry up
Fire lose heat –

33 But this cannot be, O rājā,
I will not rule the earth without you."
He said again and again,
"This cannot be. Have pity.
This cannot be. No more!

34 You will be our rājā
For a hundred years."
Saying this, he broke down,
And wept profusely.

35 He clasped the feet of his eldest brother
Who deserved his respect.
Seeing Duḥśāsana in such a plight,
And Duryodhana equally in misery,

36 Karṇa approached them and said,
"Lord of the Kauravas,
what is the matter? Why this sobbing
like foolish children?

37 How will tears drive away
the cause of your grief?
Have tears ever solved the problems
that bring grief?

38 How does it help you to sob
in this manner?
Be patient, be firm.
Your tears can only delight your enemies.

39 O rājā! The Pāṇḍavas did only their duty
when they rescued you.
Those who live in a rājā's realm
should help the rājā.

40 Protected by you, the Pāṇḍavas live
in your kingdom,
and happily too. Don't give in to grief
like simple-minded people.

41 Look, your brothers are so depressed,
hearing you will fast to death.
Rise and prosper!
Console them. Enter the city."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIFTY

1 Karṇa continued: "O rājā! You are a hero!
your behaviour today has been childish.
That the Pāṇḍavas should rescue you –
what's strange about that?

2 You were vanquished by the enemy.
Very well, but, O foe-conquering Kaurava,
those who live in your kingdom,
specially warriors,

3 Are duty-bound to love and protect their king,
whether they know who he is or not.
It is possible
that even the best leader,

4 Instead of succeeding in defeating his enemy,
suffers a temporary defeat.
Don't his soldiers
come then to his aid?

5 The soldiers who obtain their livelihood
in a kingdom
should come to the king's aid
when he needs it.

6 The Pāṇḍavas do live in your kingdom –
why shouldn't they rescue you?
O rājā, was it right
of the Pāṇḍavas

7 Not to be with you
when you marched to battle?
Isn't it true that they became your slaves
long ago?

8 They are brave, skilful, adventurous –
why shouldn't they come and help you?
You are justified in enjoying
the fruits of their strength.

9 *They* have not given up hope –
they have not resolved to fast to death.
Rise, O rājā!
Proper! Cast off despair!

10 King! It is the accepted and expected duty
of those who live in a kingdom
to serve their rājā.
Why are you so agitated?

11 You may not act as I advise,
O foe-crushing Indra-among rājās,
I will nonetheless continue to serve
respectfully at your feet.

12 O bull-among-men,
I have no wish to live without you.
If you fast to death,
other rājās will simply ridicule you."

13 O Janamejaya! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Rājā Duyodhana listened to Karṇa,
but did not rise from where he sat,
because he was determined to go to heaven.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-ONE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
O rājā! Seeing rājā Duryodhana,
known for his inability
to tolerate insult,
resolved to fast to death,
Subala's son Śakuni said:

2 "O Kaurava descendant! Karṇa is right.
Why do you wish
to throw away the grand prosperity
I have planned for you

3 By behaving in this thoughtless why?
It seems to me
that you have learned nothing
from your elder counsellors.

4 A man who cannot contain himself
when sudden joy or sorrow strikes him,
is doomed to perish
like an unfired clay pot dissolving in water.

5 The king who has no courage,
no manly enterprise,
who broods and delays, and is whimsical,
gets no respect.

6 You have gained in every way,
so why this deep grief?
Don't undo by your pointless despair
the good done by the Pāṇḍavas.

7 O Indra-among-rājās!
You should thank and reward the Pāṇḍavas.
Instead, you sit and weep.
All this is most eccentric.

8 Come, smile! Don't give up life!
Be happy and think
of the good done to you.
Return to Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons their kingdom,
and win dharma and fame
by this act.

9 Become good brother again with the Pāṇḍavas,
establish friendly relations,
and also make them friendly
to you.

10 Return them their share of the ancestral kingdom,
but rejoice!"
Hearing these words of Sakuni
(Vaiśampāyana continued), and seeing Duḥśāsana

11 His brave devoted brother
prostrate at his feet,
unmanned by excessive affection,
Duryodhana raised foe-annihilating Duḥśāsana up,

12 Clasped him in his handsome arms
and lovingly smelt his head.
The words of Karṇa
and Subala's son Śakuni

13 Filled rājā Duryodhana with shame;
he was overwhelmed,
so much so that he despaired
even worse than before.

14 He listened to all
that his well-wishers said,
and repeated sorrowfully,
"Dharma, wealth, comfort, power, authority,

15 Pleasure – I want none of these.
Go! Leave me alone, all of you.
I am resolved
to fast to death.

16 Return to the city and offer pūjā
to my elders and gurus."
Instructed thus by him,
they replied to the foe-punishing rājā:

17 "O Indra-among-rājās! Bharata descendant!
What you decide is our duty too.
How can we return
without you?"

18 His friends, brothers, advisers and relatives
tried all means of persuasion,
but Duryodhana
had resolved firmly.

19 To carry out his decision, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
spread *kuśa* grass on the earth,
purified himself by touching water,
and sat down.

20 Dressed in rags and *kuśa* grass,
he undertook the greatest vow of all.
Bent on achieving heaven,
he stopped speaking.

21 He began to meditate and worship inward,
he gave up all outside connection.
The sons of Diti
and the Dānava anti-gods,

22 The fierce dwellers in the lower region of Pātāla
who had once
been defeated by the gods,
fearing another defeat without Duryodhana,

23 Started a karma-sacrifice to summon him
in front of them.
Mantra-chanters began with the mantras
of Bṛhaspati and Uśanas-Śukra,

24 Performing rituals which the Atharva-Veda
and Upaniṣads
declare as capable of being accomplished
through mantra-power and *japa.*

25 Strict-vowed mantra-chanting Brahmins,
learned in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas,
meditated deep and poured libations
of ghee and milk

26 In the sacred fire.
O rājā! When the rites were completed,
a mahā-wonder-woman with gaping mouth,
Kṛtyā, materialised.

27 Pleased, the Daitya anti-gods commanded her,
saying "Bring rājā Duryodhana,
the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra here –
he is engaged in a death-fasting-vow."

28 Thus ordered, Kṛtyā departed, saying,
"It will be done."
In an instant she came to the spot
where rājā Suyodhana. Duryodhana was.

29 She lifted him up and transported the rājā
to Rasātala-Pātāla.
She informed the Dānava anti-gods
she had brought the king.
Seeing Duryodhana brought at night among them,
the Dānava anti-gods

30 Were delighted. Their eyes widening in joy,
their hearts brimming with success,
they spoke flatteringly
to Duryodhana.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-TWO

1 "O Indra-among-rājās," said the Dānava anti-gods,
"protector of the Bharata dynasty Suyodhana-
Duryodhana! *Bho! Bho!* You are always surrounded
by brave and brilliant mahātmās.

2 Why are you so stubborn
about fasting to death?
Suicide leads to terrible consequences,
and brings reproach.

3 Wise men like you cannot indulge
in demeaning deeds
which go against their doer
and frustrate their own purpose.

4 Rājā, control yourself. Give up your resolve,
It is contrary
to dharma, prosperity, and happiness;
it cannot bring you
fame, prowess and success.
It will delight your enemies.

5 King, lord, *prabhu,* find out the nature
of the divine origin
of your birth and your wonderful body –
and be patient.

6 O rājā! In the distant past,
we practised tapasyā and obtained you
from Maheśvara-Śiva.
Your chest is made of thunder,

7 O defectless one, and no weapons
can harm it.
Your lower limbs, fashioned of flowers
by Pārvatī Devī herself,
have the power to seduce
any female heart.

8 O most excellent monarch!
Your body has been moulded
by Īśvara himself and his goddess.
O tiger-like rājā! It's divine, not human.

9 Mahā-valiant Kṣatriyas, led by the illustrious warrior
Bhagadatta, using divine weapons,
will see to it that your enemies
are exterminated.

10 So why have you succumbed to grief?
You need not fear.
Many Dānava anti-gods have taken birth on earth
to help you.

11 Other anti-gods will possess Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, Karṇa and other heroes;
thus possessed, they will fight,
shutting out all mercy.

12 Sons, brothers, fathers, friends,
disciples, relatives, children, old men –

13 None will be spared by the Kaurava warriors
when the Dānava anti-gods
possess them and harden
their hearts.

14 Ignorance will blind these tiger-like warriors,
anger drive them berserk;
all thoughts of gentleness and kindness
will desert them.

15 Such will be their ordained fate.
They will hurl abuses at each other,
all these warriors;
they will brandish
all manner of weapons, shouting,
"Today I will kill you!"

16 O excellent Kaurava! They will set about
slaughtering each other.
The five mahātmā sons of Pāṇḍu
will be ranged against them.

17 Assisted by fate, the mahā-powerful Pāṇḍavas
will destroy them all.
Many Daitya anti-gods and yakṣas,
born among the Kṣatriyas,

18 Will employ maces, clubs, spears,
and join in the battle
with adamantine zeal,
aiming to kill their foes.

19 O valiant one! We know that fear of Arjuna
sits in your heart,
so we have already devised a means
of getting rid of him.

20 The ātman of the anti-god Naraka
whom Krishna killed
has entered Karṇa's body. O valiant one!
He will recall his earlier hatred,
and kill both
Keśava-Krishna and Arjuna.

21 The mahā-chariot-warrior Karṇa,
best of arms-wielders,
immensely confident, will kill Pārtha-Arjuna
and all your enemies.

22 Thunder-hurling Vajrī-Indra, anticipating this
and eager to save ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna, will disguise himself
and steal Karṇa's flesh-earrings and armour.

23 Therefore we have selected
hundreds of thousands
of Daitya anti-gods and rākṣasas,
known as the Saṁśaptakas,

24 All magnificent warriors,
whose duty will be to kill heroic Arjuna.
Do not grieve.
You will rule the world.

25 Do not give in to despair.
O descendant of Kuru, sorrow ill suits you.
If you die,
our party will suffer.

26 Hero, go – and let not your mind
think of anything else.
The gods support the Pāṇḍavas.
You are our support."

27 The Daitya anti-gods and bull-brave Dānavas
embraced the best of kings Duryodhana;
the anti-gods cheered him
like a son.

28 O Bharata-descendant,
consoled by their soothing speeches,
he left; their parting words were,
"Go, be victorious!"

29 Then mahā-muscled Duryodhana
was transported
by the power of Kṛtyā to the same spot
where he contemplated suicide.

30 She alighted the hero down gently,
offered him pūjā-homage,
and with the rājā's permission,
vanished as suddenly as she had come.

31 O descendant of Bharata,
after she disappeared instantaneously,
it seemed to Rājā Duryodhana
that all this had been a dream

32 Ill-minded Duryodhana recalled the words
of the Dānava anti-gods and thought:
Surely I can wipe out the Pāṇḍavas in battle.
Karṇa and the Saṁśaptakas

33 Were assumed by Duryodhana to be sufficient
to kill Pārtha-Arjuna.
With this hope the wicked son
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra

34 Convinced himself that he had already
defeated the Pāṇḍavas.
Karṇa also, possessed by Naraka's ātman,
O bull-brave Janamejaya,

35 Was cruelly confident he would kill Arjuna.
As for the Saṁśaptakas –
they were possessed
by the rākṣasas

36 And, guided by the guṇas
of dark *tamas* and violent *rajas*,
planned to kill Phālguna-Arjuna. Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
Kṛpa, possessed by the Dānava anti-gods,

37 Did not have the same regard for the Pāṇḍavas
which they had earlier.
Suyodhana-Duryodhana
did not reveal to anyone
what the Dānava anti-gods had told him
at dead of night, through Kṛtyā's help.

38 When the night ended, the sun's son Karna
did *añjali*
before Duryodhana, smiled,
and said to him:

39 "Dead men don't win wars.
Only the living taste victory.
What good is a corpse, O Kaurava?
Can a corpse win a battle?

40 This is not the time to grieve or weep
or fear death."
Saying this, he warmly embraced
mahā-limbed Duryodhana,

41 And added; "Rājā, stand up!
Why are you still in bed?
Destroyer of your foes,
why this love of death?

42 You are really paralysed by fear
of valiant Arjuna,
but I promise you that I will kill Arjuna
in battle.

43 Ruler of men,
I swear by touching my weapon that,
after the thirteen years' exile,
I will make the Pāṇḍavas your slaves."

44 The words of Karṇa,
the requests of his brothers,
and recollections of the Daitya anti-gods' promises,
made Suyodhana-Duryodhana rise.

45 Inspired by the words of the Daitya anti-gods,
that tiger-among-men
reorganised his army of soldiers, horses,
elephants and chariots.

46 That massively-marching army looked
like the waters of the Gaṅgā,
as it moved with umbrellas,
flags, yak-tails,

47 Chariots and elephants and soldiers;
it looked as lovely
as the sky when the clouds have gone
and signs of autumn

48 Are faintly visible.
Honoured and praised as a monarch
by the Indra-like Brahmins
who all prayed for his success,

49 Suyodhana-Duryodhana, son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
received all the honours by doing *añjali.*
He shone
in unsurpassed splendour,

50 O Indra-among-rājās, as he walked in front,
accompanied by Karṇa,
Subala's son Śakuni the gambler, Duḥśāsana,
and all his brothers,

51 Bhūriśravas, Somadatta, and mahārājā Bāhlīka.
His retinue
consisted of chariots, horses,
and the finest elephants.

52 O Indra-among-rājās,
in a very short time all those illustrious
descendants of the Kaurava dynasty
entered their capital city.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-THREE

1 "While the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas passed their exile,"
asked Janamejaya,
"what did the mahā-archer sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra do?

2 What did the sun's son Vaikartana-Karṇa,
mahā-powerful Śakuni,
Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and Kṛpa do?
Tell me all."

3 After the Pāṇḍavas left (continued Vaiśampāyana),
leaving Suyodhana-Duryodhana behind,
that is, after Duryodhana's rescue by the Pāṇḍavas,
he went to Hastināpura.

4 Then, mahārāja, Bhīṣma said to Duryodhana,
"*Tāta,* my child,
I told you before you left
for the forest of tapasyā

5 That I did not approve of your journey.
But you were stubborn.
Hero, you were defeated and captured
by your enemies;

6 You were freed by the dharma-knowing Pāṇḍavas.
Yet you show no shame.
Son of Gāndhāri, king, in the presence
of your soldiers

7 The charioteer's son Karṇa panicked and fled
from the field of battle.
And while you were being trounced
in battle

8 You saw, O Indra-among-rājās,
the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas display their feats –
and you saw wicked Karṇa's exploits too.
O mahā-muscled one,

9 Best of kings, cherisher of dharma!
Karṇa is not a fourth of the Pāṇḍavas
in military skill,
heroism and dharma.

10 For the sake of the prosperity of this dynasty,
O finest of peace-makers,
I would suggest you make peace
with the mahātmā sons of Pāṇḍu."

11 O rājā! Advised by Bhīṣma,
that lord-of-men Duryodhana guffawed,
and abruptly left
with Subala's son Śakuni.

12 Seeing him go, Karṇa, Duḥśāsana
and other mahā-bowman
followed the mahā-powerful son
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

13 O rājā! Bhīṣma saw them all leave.
The Kuru-pitāmaha grancestor Bhīṣma,
humbled and in shame,
returned to his house.

14 Mahārāja, after Bhīṣma had left,
the lord-of-men
Duryodhana, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son,
met his advisers.

15 "What should I do? What is best for me?"
he asked.
"How can we quickly execute
whatever we decide today?"

16 "O Kaurava descendant," Karṇa replied,
"listen attentively to my suggestion.
Bhīṣma blames us
and glorifies the Pāṇḍavas.

17 O mahā-muscled hero, because he does not like you,
he insults even me.
He rebukes, me in your very presence,
O lord of men!

18 Foe-punishing descendant of Bharata!
I cannot tolerate the words
that Bhīṣma comes out with
when he

19 Starts praising the Pāṇḍavas at your expense.
O rājā! O Bharata descendant!
I suggest you supply me with soldiers,
attendants and chariots.

20 O rājā! I shall set out to subjugate
the hill-wood-and-forest-decorated earth.
It has been conquered once
by the four Pāṇḍavas.

21 I will re-conquer it for you – and singlehanded!
Yes indeed!
And the malicious Kaurava scoundrel Bhīṣma.
will witness it!

22 He is all praise for those
who don't deserve praise,
and abuses the undeserving too.
Let him witness my prowess!

23 O rājā, grant me this.
I promise you victory is yours.
I touch my weapon and I vow
I will do it, O rājā."

24 Bull-brave Bharata rājā Janamejaya!
When Duryodhana heard these words,
he was overjoyed,
and he said to Karṇa:

25 "I am fortunate to have you on my side.
With a man of your mahā-prowess
protecting me,
my life is bound to be fruitful.

26 Brave hero, go!
Your aim is to defeat my foes.
Go, and may you succeed.
What else do you want?"

27 O foe-chastising Janamejaya,
when Karṇa heard these words
of intelligent Duryodhana,
he made all the preparations.

28 On the auspicious *muhūrta*
of an auspicious lunar night,
under the influence of a star
governed by an auspicious deity,
after receiving the pūjā-respect
of the auspicious twice-born, the mahā-archer,

29 Bathing with auspicious water,
pūjā-respected by all,
Karṇa departed;
the rattle of his chariot
reverberated in the three worlds'
moving and unmoving forms of life.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-FIVE

1 O bull-brave Bhārata Janamejaya
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
mahā-bowman Karṇa, leading a mammoth army,
attacked Drupada's capital.

2 After a fierce battle, he subjugated king Drupada
and forced him
to pay silver, gold and jewels
as tribute.

3 O Indra-among-rājās! He subdued Drupada,
and succeeded in subduing also all the rājās
who were Drupada's vassals,
and he exacted tribute from them,

4 O great Bharata,
for such was his military prowess.
Then, proceeding north,
he humbled the northern kings.

5 He subdued Bhagadatta;
Rādhā's son Karṇa went up
the mahā-towering Himālayas,
victorious all along his great march.

6 He seemed to be everywhere,
conquering and subjugating.
All the kings of the Himālayas
were forced to pay tribute.

7 He moved southwards, and brought
the rājās of Nepāla under his power
after which he struck
in the east.

8 Aṅga, Baṅga, Kaliṅga, Suṇḍika, Mithilā,
Magadha, Karkhaṇḍava – he annexed these,

9 And attacked Āvaśira, Yodhya and Ahikṣatra.
Annexing these, he marched on Vatsabhūmi.

10 Devastating Vatsabhūmi, he attacked Kevala and
Mṛttikāvati,
Mohana, Pattana, Tripurī and Kosala.

11 All of them paid him tribute.
Then he proceeded south,
defeating many mahā-chariot-warriors

12 In the south Karṇa fought fiercely with Rukmin.
Rukmin fought bravely, and then said to Karṇa:

13 "O Indra-among-rājās.
I am pleased with your exploits.
I have fulfilled my Kṣatriya vow;
I will fight no more.

14 I will gladly offer you all the gold
that you desire."
Subduing Rukmin,
Karṇa turned to Pāṇḍya and Śaila.

15 He conquered Kerala, and subdued Nīla,
son of Veṇudāri, and other excellent southern kings.

16 Sūta's son Karṇa defeated Śiśupāla's son,
bringing under his sway all the neighbouring rulers.

17 O bull-brave Bharata,
after defeating the Avanti rulers,
he made peace with them;
he routed the western Vṛṣṇis.

18 Moving to the realm of Varuṇa,
he exacted tribute
from the Yavana and Barbara tribes
in the west.

19 Conquering the whole world –
east west, north, south –
he singlehanded routed the Mlecchas
and the hill-races,

20 Bhadras, Rohitakas, Āgneyas, Mālavas;
he overcome the people-ruled territories.

21 Smiling, he subdued the kingdoms
of the Śaśakas and Yavanas;
he routed the chariot-warriors led
by Nagnajit.

22 Having overrun the whole world,
the mahā-chariot-warrior Karṇ a,
that tiger-among men,
returned to Hastināpura.

23 There the mahā-archer was received
by Duryodhana,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Duryodhana's brothers.
O mahārāja Janamejaya!

24 They honoured him profusely
on his world-conquest,
and Duryodhana specially celebrated his feat,
saying:

25 "May you prosper!
What Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa and Bāhlīka
could not give me,
you have given.

26 What is the use of spouting big words?
O mahā-muscled Karṇa, listen to me.
Finest of men,
you are my protector.

27 O tiger-among-men,
the successful Pāṇḍavas and all the other rājās
cannot equal one-sixteenth
of your accomplishments.

28 Karṇa, mahā-bowman, look now
at revered Dhṛtarāṣṭra and illustrious Gāndhārī
as thunder-wielding Indra
looks at Aditi."

29 Then, O Janamejaya,
there burst from all corners of the city
a cacophonous roar
and cries of "Hai! Hai!"

30 O ruler of men,
some of the citizens praised him
while others preferred to remain silent
in the matter.

31 O Indra-among-rājās,
quickly conquering the earth
with her wealth of mountains, forests,
skies, fields, oceans,

32 The high and low territories,
cities and hosts of islands,
and obtaining
all the earth's treasures,

33 The inexhaustible riches
of the abundant earth,
Sūta's son Karṇa presented himself
before Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

34 O mighty foe-punisher Janamejaya,
he entered the palace,
and he saw in front of him Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and Gāndhārī.

35 Tiger-among-men Karṇa, in accordance with dharma,
touched their feet as would a son.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra embraced him,
and gave him leave to go.

36 From that time, rājā Duryodhana
and Subala's son Śakuni
were convinced that Karṇa would surely
defeat the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-FIVE

1 O rājā, lord of men (Vaiśampāyana said),
that great slayer-of-hostile-heroes Karṇa
then said
to Duryodhana:

2 "Kaurava Duryodhana,
listen very carefully to what I say.
Foe-chastiser, after listening to me,
follow my advice.

3 Best among kings, hero,
your enemies have been removed from this earth.
Your can now rule the earth
like a radiant Śakra-Indra."

4 Rājā Duryodhana listened to Karṇa
and replied:
"Nothing is impossible for him
who has a bull-brave hero like you on his side,

5 To guard him and enhance his welfare.
Let me now tell you something
to which you should listen
attentively.

6 Sūta's son, I have watched
the Pāṇḍavas perform
the mahā Rājasūya sacrifice.
Help me to perform it too."

7 Karṇa replied to Duryodhana,
"Finest of kings,
now that all the rājās of the world
are under your control,

8 You should summon Brahmins,
O excellent Kaurava,
and assemble the materials
needed for the yajña.

9 Rājā, foe-punisher,
summon the *ṛtvik* Brahmins,
wise in the Vedas,
to perform the śāstra-ordained rites.

10 O bull-brave Bharata,
see to it that at your mahā-yajña
there is abundant food and drink.
Be generous, be lavish."

11 Advised in this manner by Karṇa,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana
summoned the purohita
and said to him:

12 "Perform the greatest of all sacrifices,
the Rājasūya,
in the ordained way, and be generous
with the *dakṣiṇās.*"

13 Those finest of Brahmins listened
and said to the king
in the presence of the assembly
of learned Brahmins:
"The sacrifice cannot be performed
so long as Yudhiṣṭhira lives.

14 O finest of kings, excellent Kaurava,
your long-lived father Dhṛtarāṣṭra
is still alive,
and that is

15 Another reason why you cannot proceed
with the yajña.
There is, however, another great sacrifice
equalling the Rājasūya.

16 O Indra-among-rājās, heed my advice,
and perform that.
All the rulers of the earth
whom you have subdued

17 Will come and pay you tribute
in pure and mixed gold.
O finest of kings
from that gold make a plough.

18 With it plough the yajña site.
O finest of kings,
at that spot, without any interference,
order the rites

19 Of the yajña to be inaugurated,
after proper sanctification and chanting.
This yajña of good men
is the Vaiṣṇava-yajña.

20 None except the Ancient Viṣṇu
has performed it.
This mahā-sacrifice equals the Rājasūya yajña
in its effects.

21 It is a remarkable and desirable yajña,
and can be performed
without hindrance.
It will fulfil your desires."

22 Advised by the Brahmins,
the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
said to Karṇa, Subala's son Śakuni,
and his brothers:

23 "I am impressed by the words
of the Brahmins.
If you feel the same,
then let the yajña proceed."

24 They listened, and said,
"So let it be."
One by one, the rājā selected officials
for the sacrifice.

25 He ordered special artisans
to mould the plough.
All the commands of that finest of kings
were diligently executed.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-SIX

1 The artisans, the chief advisers
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and mahā-wise Vidura
said to Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana:

2 "O rājā, all is ready for the sacrifice.
Let the rituals commence.
The highly-valuable golden plough
is ready."

3 Finest-of-kings Duryodhana listened to them,
and issued orders
for the inauguration
of that rājā of sacrifices.

4 Sanctified by chantings and food-offerings,
the great yajña began.
Gāndhāri's son Duryodhana
was ritually honoured.

5 Dhṛtarāṣṭra, mahā-illustrious Vidura, Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, Kṛpa,
Karṇa and famed Gāndhārī,
all rejoiced.

6 O Indra-among-rājās,
swift messengers were sent
with invitations to the foremost kings
and Brahmins.

7 They drove speedy chariots
to their various destinations.
Duḥśāsana said to a messenger
about to leave:

8 "Hurry to the forest of Dvaitavana,
and invite the Brahmins there
and the wicked ones,
the Pāṇḍavas."

9 The messenger reached the forest and,
praṇāma-ing the Pāṇḍavas,
said, "Mahārāja,
the lord of all kings, Duryodhana,

10 The greatest of the Kauravas,
has started a yajña
after obtaining enormous wealth and power.
He has invited rājās and Brahmins.

11 O rājā! I have this message
from the mahā-ātmaned Kaurava:
'The lord-of-men rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
invites you.

12 Please make it convenient to attend
the rājā's sacrifice'."
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira listened to the messenger,
and replied:

13 "It is an auspicious event
that rājā Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
enhancer of Kaurava glory,
is performing this great ritual.

14 We would be delighted to attend,
but we cannot
because we have to pass thirteen years of exile
in the forest."

15 Bhīma heard the reply of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
and said:
"Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira will attend
the yajña

16 After I have thrust Duryodhana
into the fire kindled by my fatal weapon.
So go to Suyodhana. Duryodhana
and inform him,

17 'I will come at the end
of the thirteenth year
when the Pāṇḍavas,
in the yajña of war,
have scalded the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
with the ghee of my anger.' "

18 O rājā, the other Pāṇḍavas did not say
any disagreeable words.
The messenger returned and reported everything
to Duryodhana.

19 O mahā-fortune-favoured Janamejaya!
Rulers of different lands,
many Brahmins of great merit,
came to the city of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

20 They were welcomed in accordance
with the rules of the śāstras;
the lords of men were delighted and honoured
by their reception.

21 Indra-among-kings Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
surrounded by all the Kauravas,
was mahā-pleased;
he said to Vidura:

22 "See to it that all the people
present today at the yajña
are served meals
and proper refreshments."

23 O foe-chastising Janamejaya!
Learned and dharma-knowing Vidura ascertained
the exact numbers of guests, received them
with pūjā-respect, and entertained them

24 With food preparations
and a variety of drinks;
he arranged for scented garlands
and exquisite dresses.

25 Ordering the construction of many pavilions,
Indra-among-rājās Duryodhana
entertained the visiting dignitaries
and rulers,

26 As well as the thousands of eminent Brahmins.
He offered them wealth in various forms
and bid them farewell.
Accompanied by his brothers

27 Duryodhana then entered Hastināpura
with Karṇa and Subala's son Śakuni.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-SEVEN

1 O finest of rājās! Mahārāja Janamejaya!
(said Vaiśampāyana),
bards and praise-singers eulogised
Duryodhana's undecaying glory.
Others also sang the praises
of the mahā-bowman,

2 Sprinkling fried rice-grains and sandalwood powder
on him.
"O king," they said,
"successful is the yajña's completion."

3 There were some indiscreet ones present
who said to the lord of the earth:
"This yajña cannot compare
with Yudhiṣṭhira's.

4 It does not equal even one-sixteenth
of Yudhiṣṭhira's yajña."
Such were the comments of those
who were not careful in speech.

5 Duryodhana's friends said,
"This sacrifice has excelled all others.
Yayāti, Nahuṣa, Māndhātā and Bharata
all performed

6 Exactly such a sacrifice
and attained the realm of heaven."
O bull-brave Bhārata,
hearing these sweet words of his friends,

7 Duryodhana confidently entered the palace.
Lord-of-the-earth Janamejaya!
He touched the feet
of his father and mother;

8 Then, led by Bhīṣma, Droṇa
and wise Vidura,
and receiving the respect
of his younger brothers,

9 Duryodhana, the pride of his brothers,
relaxed on a comfortable seat.
Sūta's son Karṇa rose
and said to mahārāja Duryodhana:

10 "Finest of all the Bharatas!
Good fortune has enabled you
to complete the mahā-sacrifice.
After Pṛthā-Kunti's sons are all killed,
and you complete the Rājasūya yajña,
at that time

11 I will honour you again like this, O finest-of-men."
The mahā-illustrious son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
mahārāja Duryodhana,
said to him:

12 "There is truth in your words!
When, O finest of men,
the wicked-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas are killed,
and I perform the mahā-sacrifice –

13 The Rājasūya – then, again, O hero,
you will honour me as you do now."
O Bharata Janamejaya!
He embraced Karṇa,

14 And began thinking of that greatest of all sacrifices–
the Rājasūya.
Duryodhana turned
and said to the excellent kings:

15 "O Kauravas, tell me – when will come
the exact time of my mahā-expensive Rājasūya
after the destruction
of all the Pāṇḍava?"

16 Karṇa replied: "O elephant-strong rājā,
listen to me!
I will not wash my feet
until I have killed Arjuna!

17 I will not touch meat,
I will follow the vow of the anti-gods.
If I am asked for anything
by anybody,
I will not say,
'I don't have it.' "

18 After Karṇa made this vow
to kill Phālguna-Arjuna on the battleheld,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's mahā-warrior-sons
roared approval.

19 They considered the Pāṇḍavas now
as already dead.
O Indra-among-rājās!
Duryodhana left those bull-strong men,

20 And entered his palace
as Kubera enters the garden of Citraratha,
The mahā bowmen also
went to their homes.

21 The Pāṇḍavas were disturbed
by the words of the messenger;
those mahā-archers passed their days
in great anxiety.

22 O Indra-among-rājās,
spies had further brought them news
that the charioteer's son Karṇa had taken a vow
to kill Vijaya-Arjuna.

23 When Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira heard this,
O lord-of-men, he was filled with worry.
He remembered that powerful Karna
possessed invulnerable armour.

24 He recalled their days of suffering,
and peace descerted him.
Mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira, full of concern,
made up his mind

25 To leave the animal-abundant forest
of Dvaitavana.
Meanwhile, the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra began
to rule the earth

26 With the help of his brothers,
and Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa
and the gambler Śakuni.
Assisted by the glory-laden Śūta's son Karṇa,

27 Duryodhana devoted his energies
to please the rulers of the earth.
He gave enormous *dakṣiṇā* and pūjā-respect
to ritual-performing Brahmins.

28 O rājā! Foe-punishing Duryodhana did his best
for his brothers' welfare,
having decided that giving and enjoying
are the best uses of wealth.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-EIGHT

1 "After rescuing Duryodhana," asked Janamejaya,
"what did the mahā-powerful Pāṇḍavas do?
Tell me all about
all their activities."

2 It so happened (continued Vaiśampāyana)
that one night Yudhiṣṭhira had a dream
in which sobbing deer of the Dvaitavana forest
appeared before him.

3 They stood, shaking all over,
and did *añjali* before that Indra-among-rājās.
"Who are you?" he asked.
"What do you want of me?"

4 Questioned by the illustrious Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
 the deer –
the remainder of a butchered flock –
 said to him:

5 "Descendant of Bharata,
We are the deer of Dvaitavana –
Those who survived the slaughter.
Soon there will be none left.
Leave this place, mahārāja.

6 Your brothers are all brave men,
And skilled in weapons.
They have decimated the beasts of this forest.

7 O mahā-minded Yudhiṣṭhira,
We, the few who remain, are the seed.
O Indra-among-rājās, be merciful.
Let us multiply."

8 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira saw the seed-deer
 trembling with fear
in front of him,
 and he was deeply moved.

9 Always aiming at the good
 of all creatures,
the rājā said to them,
 "Very well, I will do as you say."

10 He woke from his dream
 with pity stirring inside him
for the helpless deer,
 and the finest of rājās said to his brothers:

11 "The surviving deer of this forest
 came to me
in a dream last night and said,
 'We are the only remaining seed
of our species.
 Have pity on us.'

12 They spoke the truth.
 We should have some feelings
for these forest-creatures. We have fed on them
 for a year and eight months.

13 Let us return to the enchanting
incomparable forest of Kāmyaka,
full of wild life, near the wasteland
off lake Tṛṇabindu.

14 Let us spend the rest of our exile there."
So the Pāṇḍavas,
learned in dharma,
left the forest of Dvaitavana.

15 O rājā! With them went the Brahmins
and others of their retinue.
Also with them were Indrasena
and other attendants.

16 They took to the road
after furnishing themselves
with good corn and pure water,
and came to the sacred Kāmyaka ashram.

17 Like good men entering the holy regions of the gods,
those finest of Bharatas,
those Kuru-descendants and their Brahmins,
entered that forest.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-NINE

1 O bull-brave Bharata (continued Vaiśampāyana),
the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas
passed eleven years in the forest
in great suffering.

2 These excellent men deserved happiness,
but had to pass their days
brooding on their lot,
nibbling at roots and fruits.

3 The rājā-ṛṣi mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira often thought,
I am responsible
for the miserable plight of my brothers,
its sole cause.

4 The rājā would toss sleepless at night,
thinking of this.
He felt as if a spear had cut
straight through his heart.

5 When he recalled the bitter words
of the charioteer's son Karṇa, he sighed deeply,
suppressing the mahā-poisonous anger
that welled up in him.

6 Arjuna, the twins Nakula and Sahadeva,
illustrious Draupadī,
Bhīma –
the strongest of strong men –

7 Would glance at him and sense his deep anguish,
and feel his pain themselves.
Knowing their exile was almost over,
the bull-brave

8 Pāṇḍavas, tossed between anger and hope,
rigorously disciplined their bodies
into almost unrecognisable shapes.
Satyavatī's son Vyāsa,

9 The mahā-yogi, came to see them.
Seeing him approaching,
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira hurried out
to welcome

10 With reverence mahātmā Vyāsa.
Sense-controlled Yudhiṣṭhira
offered him a seat.
When Vyāsa was seated,

11 The enhancer-of-Pāṇḍava-joy Yudhiṣṭhira
praṇāma-ed him.
Seeing his grandsons emaciated
by forest-living,

12 The mahā-ṛṣi was touched and said
in a sad throbbing voice:
"Mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira, best of men of dharma,
listen.

13 A man has to taste both joy and sorrow
in turns;
but without tapasya no man discovers
mahā-happiness.

14 O bull-brave hero, there is no such thing
as unending happiness.
The wise man is he who,
experiencing life's vicissitudes,

15 Neither exults nor grieves.
Enjoy happiness when it comes,
and endure sorrow
when sorrow comes,

16 Like a seed-sower satisfied
with the harvest.
Nothing excels tapasyā;
tapasyā attains the highest, the most magnificent.

17 This you should know –
nothing is beyond tapasyā.
Truth, honesty, angerlessness, willingness to share,
restraint, self-discipline,

18 Freedom from malice, refraining from violence,
purity, control of sense-pleasures –
these, mahārāja, make up
the man of pure karma.

19 Fools who pursue adharma and bestial ways,
obtain births
in inferior wombs in the next life,
and are never happy.

20 The fruits of karma done in this life
come in the next;
therefore one should restrain oneself
with tapasyā and discipline.

21 O rājā, innocently and cheerfully should a person,
according to his ability,
respect the person
to whom he offers a gift.

22 The truth-speaker lives a life
untroubled by misery.
The anger-free, unmalicious man
attains the absolute.

23 The sense-subduer never faces
profound personal anguish,
nor is he disturbed by the sight
of others' prosperity.

24 The man who gives respect where it is due,
and the giver of boons – both find joy;
the follower of ahiṁsā
finds peace of mind.

25 The man who honours the honourable
is re-born in a noble family;
the self-controlled man
meets no misfortune.

26 The man who cultivates goodness
is re-born, by Kāla-dharma,
into a life of goodness,
and blessed with a virtue-loving mind."

27 "O mahā-muni," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"*bhagavan,* revered one, which is more difficult,
which brings better re-birth –
the dharma of charity, or tapasyā?"

28 "*Tāta*, child," replied Vyāsa, "nothing in this world
is more difficult than charity.
Men hunger and struggle hard
for possessions.

29 O mahā-minded one, they risk their lives,
and heroically plunge
into deep ocean and wilderness
in pursuit of wealth.

30 They plough land, rear cattle, serve others –
for wealth.
Men go to faraway places
for profitable jobs.

31 Wealth is hard to come by,
and hard to give up;
so charity must be considered as superior
to everything.

32 It is important to keep in mind
that honest wealth
should be given away, at the right time and place,
to good men.

33 The giving-away of dishonest wealth
cannot save the donor
from the mahā-fear of rebirth
that haunts life.

34 Yudhiṣṭhira, it is said that even
a tiny gift offered
at the right time with a pure heart
gets endless fruits in the next life.

35 There is an ancient story connected with this.
It is about the fruits
obtained by Mudgala
who donated a *droṇa* of corn."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIXTY

1 "O mahā-ātmaned one," asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
"why did the mahātmā
give a *droṇa* of corn and to whom?
Tell me.

2 In my opinion, only the life
of that man of dharma
bears fruit with whose karma
Divinity is well-pleased."

3 O rājā, (replied Vyāsa), there once lived
in Kurukṣetra
a dharmātmā, truthful, unmalicious,
a self-controlled man
who followed the *śila* and *uñcha* profession:
his name was Mudgala.

4 His profession was to live on grain leftovers,
like a pigeon;
but he always entertained guests lavishly,
he performed the Iṣṭīkṛta sacrifice,
he was a man
of mahā-tapasyā.

5 That muni, his wife and son subsisted
for a fortnight pecking like pigeons
on the *droṇa* of grain he collected
during the previous fortnight.

6 He performed the Darṣa and Paurṇamāsa rituals;
the innocent ṛṣi
spent his days collecting the leftover food
of deities and guests.

7 On auspicious lunar days,
the lord-of-the-three-worlds Indra,
and the gods, accepted the food
of his yajña, mahārāja.

8 On these auspicious days
the muni lived like an ascetic
and joyfully provided his guests with food
and hospitality.

9 And even as the mahātmā distributed
his *droṇa* of food, however swiftly,
the remainder of the corn increased
as new guests arrived.

10 Because he had a pure and generous heart,
the *droṇa*-of corn increased such
that hundreds of learned Brahmins
could be fed.

11 One day, the sky-clad ṛṣi Durvāsas,
hearing of the vow of hospitality
taken by firm-in-dharma Mudgala,
came to his house.

12 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
He was dressed like a madman,
his head was shaven clean,
and he came there mouthing insults.

13 The excellent muni Durvāsas stood there
and said to the Brahmin Mudgala:
"Good Brahmin, know that I have come here
for food."

14 The muni Mudgala replied, "Welcome!"
He then went in
and brought *arghya*-water to wash the feet
and rinse the mouth

15 Of that lunatic ascetic.
Following his dedicated vow of hospitality,
he placed delicious food
before the hungry ascetic,

16 Who, with ravenous speed,
gobbled all that had been offered to him.
Mudgala went in
and fetched more food.

17 The mad Durvasas devoured that too,
and rubbed
the defiled leftovers on his body,
after which he left.

18 He came again during the next auspicious season
and consumed
all the food offered by the *uñcha*-following
wise muni Mudgala.

19 Mudgala did not eat any food himself,
but resumed
collecting the corn pickings.
Hunger did not agitate him.

20 Neither anger, nor envy, nor restlessness,
nor puzzlement
disturbed the *uñca*-following ṛṣi, his wife,
and his son.

21 Durvāsas returned season after season
to the house
of that excellent muni who had accepted
the *uñcha* mode of life.

22 But Durvāsas failed to find
the least uneasiness
in Mudgala's heart;
it was always innocent and generous.

23 Profoundly impressed and pleased,
Durvāsas said to the muni Mudgala,
"There is no one in this world
innocent and charitable like you.

24 Strong pangs of hunger drive away
all sense of dharma and patience.
The tongue loves delicacies,
and food always fascinates.

25 Life depends on food. It is hard
to keep the fickle mind under control.
Tapasyā means
mind and sense-control.

26 It is hard to give freely
what one has obtained painfully,
yet this, my good man,
is what you have done.

27 To be in your presence
is to be delighted and honoured.
Self-control, patience, sharing,
restraint, equanimity,

28 Mercy, truth and dharma
are embodied in you.
There is none to equal you
in depth of inner knowledge.
Your deeds have won the worlds,
you have reached the ultimate goal.

29 Aho! Even the gods are praising
your deeds of charity.
Vow-observing ṛṣi,
you will bodily ascend to heaven."

30 Even as the muni Durvāsas said this,
a messenger from heaven
arrived in a celestial chariot
in front of Mudgala.

31 The chariot was pulled by *haṁsa*-swans and cranes;
it had rows of *kiṅkiṇi*-bells,
it was scented and painted, self-propelled,
it could go where it wished.

32 He said to the Brahmin,
"Climb into this chariot.
O muni, you have obtained the supreme fruits
of your karma."

33 The ṛṣi asked the divine messenger:
"Tell me, divine messenger,
what are the qualities of those
who live in heaven?

34 What is their tapasyā,
why are they there?
What is the happiness of heaven,
what are its shortcomings?

35 Radiant one, good men of the noblest families
have declared that friendship
with pious people is formed
by walking seven steps with them.

36 Tell me, by that friendship,
the truth that is good to know.
After listening to you,
I will decide what course to take."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIXTY-ONE

1 "How simple you are, O mahā-ṛṣi!"
said the divine messenger.
"You have the bliss of heaven,
and yet you ask unwise questions.

2 What is called heaven exists above us.
It is far up, O muni;
it has excellent pathways
on which celestial chariots travel.

3 Negative thinkers, speakers of untruths,
those who do not practise tapasyā,
those who have not performed mahā-yajñas,
cannot go there, O Mudgala.

4 The dharmātmās, the ātman-knowers,
the peace-loving,
the controllers of their senses, the unmalicious,
those who practise happily
the dharma of charity, heroes,
those who carry the scars of battle,

5 After subduing their passions
and performing deeds of dharma,
attain heaven, where good men of holy deeds go,
O Brahmin.

6 O Mudgala, the gods, Sādhyas,
the Viśva-devas, mahā-ṛṣis,
the Yama and Dhāma-deities, the gandharvas,
and the apsarās –

7 These beings live in the varied,
radiant, enchanting realms of heaven,
which grant all
that a person desires.

8 In heaven is that magnificent rājā of mountains,
golden Meru,
which covers thirtythree thousand yojanas.
In it are gardens, O Mudgata,

9 Chief among them the Nandana,
where people of good karma enjoy themselves
Neither hunger, thirst,
heat, cold, fear,

10 Nothing disgusting or inauspicious
is found in Nandana.
Everywhere is ravishing fragrance,
and soothing breezes.

11 And the sounds are sweet
to both ear and mind;
there is no grief, no old age; no labour,
and no remorse;

12 Such is the world of the fruits
of one's sva-karma, O muni.
Men can attain it by the strength
of good deeds only.

13 Those who dwell in heaven
bask in the radiance of their own deeds,
not those of their fathers or mothers,
O Mudgala.

14 O muni! No sweat, stench, dung or urine;
no dust there to dirty one's clothes.

15 The fragrant garlands in heaven do not fade.
The chariots of heaven are like this one.

16 O mahā-muni,
free from envy, sorrow, weariness,
delusion and malice,
the heaven-dwellers live in bliss.

17 O bull-brave muni,
beyond such regions are others,
much further away,
with even higher celestial virtues.

18 Among these, the magnificent, effulgent,
auspicious realm of Brahmā is the highest.

19 There live the beings known as Ṛbhus,
the gods of the gods.
This is the supreme region,
and Ṛbhus are worshipped by the gods.

20 They are self-shining,
and they grant all desired objects.
Women do not excite them, they are innocent,
they have no possessions.

21 They do not need oblations nor divine nectar.
They have such celestial forms
that the senses
cannot perceive them.

22 They are happy, but they do not desire happiness;
and when the kalpa dissolves,
these gods of gods
remain unaffected.

23 They do not experience old age and death.
O muni! They do not know joy, pleasure, bliss;
no happiness and sorrow;
no like and dislike.

24 O Mudgada! Even the gods covet
their absolute state of being,
so difficult to attain,
and unachievable for the kāma-seekers.

25 There are thirtythree of these gods.
Wise men who have kept excellent vows
and practised charity,
go there.

26 You have achieved that state
with your charity,
and your radiance results from your tapasyā.
Enjoy the fruit!

27 O Brahmin, such are the worlds of heaven.
I have described
the blessings of heaven –
now listen to the defects.

28 A person can enjoy the fruits of his past karma
in heaven,
but cannot make new karma.
He enjoys what he has deserved,

29 And when his deserving is exhausted, Mudgala,
he falls from heaven.
To fall from happiness –
this must be considered a defect.

30 How intolerable it must be
to bear the discontent and regret
of living in a lower region
after enjoying the radiance of heaven.

31 Those who are about to fall from heaven
are bewildered and often agitated.
Their garlands fade,
fear haunts them.

32 Mudgala, these are the shortcomings –
even of Brahmā's realm.
The merits of the good folk in heaven
are innumerable.

33 And because of their merits, O muni,
when they fall,
these men find they have taken birth
among humans.

34 They are blessed with maha-fortune and happiness
in their new birth.
But if a man does not gain knowledge here,
he gets an inferior rebirth.

35 The fruits of karma performed in this life
are reaped in the next.
This is a karma-world of karma-fruits,
O Brahmin.

36 Mudgala, I have described to you
all that you asked.
Now, O best of the best,
permit me to speed you to heaven."

37 Finest-of-munis Mudgala gave serious thought
to the words of the messenger.
Then (continued Vyāsa),
he said to the celestial messenger:

38 "Divine messenger, I namaskāra you.
You may return.
I do not want any happiness or heaven
which has such mahā-defects.

39 It seems that men who enjoy heaven
also suffer mahā-misery and regret
in this world.
I do not want heaven.

40 My heart longs for the perfect realm
where there is no pain,
where lament and agitation
do not exist.

41 You have described to me the heaven
that has mahā-shortcomings.
Show me a region
that is without any defect."

42 "Beyond the realm of Brahmā,"
said the divine messenger,
"is Viṣṇu's seat, Parabrahma,
pure, eternal, effulgent.

43 Persons sensually inclined,
persons who are prone to pride,
greed, ignorance, mahā-anger, delusion,
and vindictiveness cannot go there.

44 Those who are not torn by conflicting desires,
those without *ahaṁkāra*-ego,
who have disciplined themselves by Dhyāna and Yoga,
go there."

45 When he heard this,
the good ṛṣi (continued Vyāsa)
was perfectly satisfied.
He took leave, and resumed his *uñcha*-life.

46 He looked with equal eyes
on praise and blame.
To him, a brick, a stone,
and a lump of gold
were the same. He used Jñāna-Yoga
for meditation.

47 And he achieved success in his Dhyana-Yoga;
illuminated by knowledge,
he attained the supreme, eternal felicity
known as Nirvāṇa.

48 Son of Kuntī, you should not grieve.
Your kingdom
has been snatched from you,
but your tapasyā will recover it.

49 Sorrow follows joy, and joy follows sorrow
in a man's life,
as surely as a wheel spinning
round its hub.

50 Hero of undecaying prowess!
After the expiry of the thirteenth year,
you will recover the kingdom
of your father and your grandfather.
Do not grieve
(ended Vyāsa).

51 Saying this to the Pāṇḍavas
(said Vaiśampāyana),
bhagavān Vyāsa returned to his āshram
to practise tapasyā.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIXTY-TWO

1 "While the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas lived in the forest,"
Janamejaya asked:
"happily conversing with the munis,
and distributing the food

2 Which they obtained from the sun,
in unending plenty,
to Brahmins and others who came
before Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī ate,

3 How, O mahā-muni,
did ill-ātmaned Duryodhana
and the other wicked sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

4 Under the guidance of Duḥśāsana, Karṇa and Śakuni,
behave with them?
Vaiśampāyana, revered one, *bhagavan*,
tell me this."

5 Mahārāja! When they learnt that the Pāṇḍavas
were living in the forest
as if in a city (Vaiśampāyana said),
Duryodhana,

6 Karṇa, Duḥśāsana and the others
wanted to harm them.
While these ill-ātmaned men were plotting
various mischiefs,

7 It so happened that the dharmātmā, mahā-illustrious
tapasyā-rich ascetic Durvāsas,
aimlessly wandering, came to the city
with ten thousand disciples.

8 Seeing that highly irascible muni arrive,
handsome Duryodhana,
restraining his feelings,
along with all

9 His brothers, welcomed him
with gentleness and humility.
He personally offered pūjā-respect to Durvāsas
as would a menial.

10 The finest of munis stayed there
a few days,
and rājā Duryodhana attended on him
day and night,

11 Because he was afraid,
O mahārāja Janamejaya,
of the muni's power of casting a curse.
"I am hungry – feed me – now, O kings,"

12 The ascetic would say and then
hurry off to bathe
and return after a long time
and declare,
"No, I will eat nothing today, I am not hungry,"
and disappear.

13 Sometimes, without warning, he would turn up,
saying, "Feed us quickly."
At other times,
to create mischief,

14 He would wake at midnight
and demand food be cooked –
and then refuse to eat it.
When he saw that king Duryodhana

15 Did not flare up or show any annoyance,
O Bharata descendant,
dreadful Durvasas relaxed and said,
"I can give boons.

16 Ask from me anything
that you would like to have,
but not violating dharma. May you prosper!
I am pleased with you."

17 These words of the inseeing mahā-ṛṣi Durvāsas
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
inspired Suyodhana-Duryodhana
with new life.

18 Ill-minded, Karṇa and Duḥśāsana and others
had already decided
on what Duryodhana would ask
if the muni was gratified.

19 O rājā! Joyfully Duryodhana asked
the following boon:
"Brahmin, since you have been
my guest so long,

20 You should go to mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira
who is a dharmātmā,
living with his brothers in the forest,
the finest and the eldest of our family, a man

21 Of many virtues and supreme courtesy,
and be his guest.
When the lovely lady Draupadī,
the illustrious princess,

22 Has fed the Brahmins
and her husbands,
and has finished her own meal,
and is ready to relax,

23 Go there, as you have come here
to oblige me."
Durvāsas said to Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
"You have pleased me. I will do so."

24 Saying this, that Indra-among-the twice-born
left as suddenly as he had come.
And Suyodhana-Duryodhana considered
all his desires as fulfilled.

25 Delighted Duryodhana took Karṇa's hand
in his.
Equally delighted were Duryodhana's brothers
and Karṇa.

26 Karṇa said, "You are very fortunate.
You have attained, O Kaurava descendant,
all you desired. Your enemies will drown
in a sea of misery.

27 The Pāṇḍavas are exposed to the flames
of Durvāsas' wrath.
Their mahā-ill-deeds will plunge them
in a chaotic darkness.'

28 Hugely pleased with themselves,
Duryodhana and the others, O rājā,
bent on mischief, cheerfully returned
to their houses.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIXTY-THREE

1 One day, when the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
were relaxing after their meal
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
Durvāsas muni

2 Entered the forest
accompanied by ten thousand disciples.
Seeing the guest arrive,
Śrīmān rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,

3 Always unceasingly courteous,
with his brothers, welcomed him.
He did *añjali* before the excellent muni,
offered him a comfortable seat,

4 Gave him the appropriate pūjā-respect,
and graciously said:
"Return soon, *bhagavan,* revered one,
after your ablutions and ritual chants."

5 The defectless muni, and his disciples,
went to bathe,
wondering: *How will he manage to feed me
and all my disciples?*

6 The assembly of self-restrained munis
hurried to the riverside.
In the meantime, O rājā,
the excellent lady Draupadi,

7 Devoted to her husbands,
worried about preparing the meal.
She gave it her deepest thought,
but could find no solution.

8 She recalled Krishna, the slayer of Kaṁsa:
She invoked:
"Krishna! Krishna! O mahā-muscled one,
eternal son of Devakī!

9 Vāsudeva!
Jagannātha!
Saviour of our followers!
Ātman of the universe! Viśvātman!
Creator of the universe! Viśvā-janaka!
Destroyer of the universe! Viśvā-harta!
Undecaying divinity! Prabho' avyayayaṁ!

10 Saviour of the distressed! Praphanna-pāla!
Gopāla!
Saviour of your subjects! Prajā-pāla!
Highest of the high! Parātpara!
Source of knowledge and clear thought!
I bow to you.

11 Adorable one!
Granter of boons!
Shelter of the helpless!
Most ancient Puruṣa!
The Prāṇa-breath that none comprehends!

12 Lord of all!
Super-excelling lord!
I ask you for refuge!
Lord who shelters his followers!
Grant me your grace.

13 Blue lotus-skinned deity!
Pink-lily-eyed lord!
Yellow-robed saviour!
Wearer of the Kaustubha gem!

14 Beginning and end of creation You are!
Refuge of all You are!
O Light beyond lights! Parātparaṁ jyoti!
O Ātman of the universe!
O Multi-faced lord! Viśvatomukha!

15 They call you the Supreme Seed,
The source of all wealth.
O lord of the gods, Deveśa,
Remover of the fears of your followers!

16 You saved me in the sabhā
When Duḥśāsana insulted me.
Help me now too
In my great predicament."

17 Eulogised by Draupadī,
    Krishna, beloved of his bhaktas,
God of gods, lord of the world,
    saw her distress;

18 And mysteriously-moving Krishna,
    lord Keśava,
left Rukmiṇī on the bed beside him,
    and hurried to Draupadī.

19 Seeing Vāsudeva-Krishna arrive, Draupadī, delighted,
    did praṇāma before him,
and told him all about the muni
    and his demands.

20 Krishna said to her: "Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
    I am famished.
First feed me, and then tell me
    about these matters."

21 Embarrassed, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī said, "Lord,
    the vessel given
by the sun-god remains full
    until I eat.

22 And I have eaten, lord,
and there is no food left."
Lotus-eyed *bhagavān* Krishna
said to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī

23 "Don't joke with me, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī;
I am hungry and tired.
Go, bring the vessel.
Show it to me."

24 His insistence made her show him the vessel.
Keśava-Krishna,
gem of the Yadavas,
saw a bit of rice and vegetable
sticking to the rim
of the inexhaustible vessel.

25 He swallowed it and said, "May Hari,
Ātman of the universe,
and may the god who eats at yajñas
be satisfied with this."

26 Maha-muscled Krishna, remover of miseries,
summoned Sahadeva
and said, "Invite the munis here
and feed them."

27 The radiantly powerful Sahadeva,
O best of kings,
went to the bathing munis
to invite them.

28 Durvāsas and the other munis
were washing themselves
in the cool, clear waters
of the Deva-nadī.

29 They all felt as if their stomachs were full.
They emerged from the water,
looking at each other
suspiciously.

30 The munis looked at Durvāsas
and muttered, "We asked the rājā
to get our meals ready,
and came here to bathe.

31 But we are full up to our necks!
How will we eat?
The food will be all wasted,
what do we do?"

32 Durvāsas said, "It was mahā-wrong of us
to ask rāja-ṛṣi Yudhiṣṭhira
to cook for us needlessly.
The anger of the Pāṇḍavas will ruin us.

33 I know that Yudhiṣṭhira, a rāja-ṛṣi,
has immense powers.
Brahmins, I fear these Pāṇḍavas
who touch Hari-Krishna's feet.

34 The Pāṇḍavas are all mahātmās,
men of dharma,
brave, wise, strict in vows,
disciplined in tapasyā.

35 They follow Vāsudeva-Krishna,
they observe good conduct;
angered they could consume us
as fire consumes a bale of cotton.
O my disciples, run away instantly
before they see you."

36 Warned by their muni guru,
the Brahmin disciples,
afraid of the Pāṇḍavas, fled
(said Vaiśampāyana).

37 Sahadeva came to the Deva-nadī
and found no excellent munis;
he searched for them everywhere
at the sacred *tīrthas.*

38 From other tapasyā-practisers there
he learnt that they had run away,
so he returned and reported this
to Yudhiṣṭhira.

39 The ātman-restrained Pāṇḍavas waited
for a long time,
thinking that the vanished ascetics
would re-appear.

40 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "They will turn up
at dead of night.
How will we ever solve this problem
that fate has thrust on us?"

41 Seeing them overpowered by misery
and sighing deeply,
gracious Śrīmān Krishna suddenly came before them
and said:

42 "Sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī! I know what problems
the irascible ṛṣi has created for you.
I came here
because Draupadī implored me.

43 You do not have to fear anything
from Durvāsas:
fearing your great prowess he has gone
and fled.

44 These who follow the path of dharma
never suffer.
Give me permission now to return home.
May you all prosper!"

45 The words of Keśava-Krishna soothed the misgivings
of Pāṇḍu's sons and Draupadī;
freed from anxiety,
they said:

46 "Lord! *Vibho*!
Govinda!
Like people drowning in a mahā-ocean,
Saved by a vessel, disembark on the shore,
We, by your grace,
Have been saved.

47 May you always prosper!
May good fortune always be with you!"
Krishna returned to his city,
And the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī,
O mahā-fortune-favoured Janamejaya,

48 Happily spent their days moving
from one forest to another.
I have told you the story, O rājā Janamejaya,
exactly as you asked.

49 This is how the crooked schemes
of wicked-ātmaned Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons,
to humiliate the Pāṇḍavas in the forest,
were frustrated.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIXTY-FOUR

1 The mahā-chariot-warriors, excellent descendants
of Bharata, the Pāṇḍavas roamed happily
in the deer-abundant Kāmyaka forest,
as if they were gods.

2 They passed through enchanting stretches
of uncultivated land,
filled with the teeming beauty
of seasonal flowers.

3 The Indra-like Pāṇḍavas, devoted to hunting,
O foe-chastising Janamejaya
livied for some time
in that huge forest.

4 One day these tigers-among-men frustraters-of-foes
wandered variously,
hunting for the sake of the Brahmins
accompanying them,

5 Leaving Draupadī behind
with the permission
of the radiant-tapasyā-ed mahā-ṛṣi Tṛṇabindu
and their purohita Dhaumya.

6 It so happened that at that time
the mahā-illustrious rājā of Sindhu,
Vṛddhakṣatra's son,
was proceeding for marriage to Śālva's kingdom.

7 He was dressed in the most luxurious
of royal robes;
many princes accompanied him.
He camped briefly at Kāmyaka.

8 There he came across the beloved wife
of the Pāṇḍavas, illustrious Draupadī,
standing near the āshram's entrance
in that unpeopled forest.

9 She was so startlingly beautiful
that her figure
seemed to glow in the forest
like lightning among dark-blue clouds.

10 *Is she an apsarā, a god's daughter,*
a divine māyā?
they thought, and they did *añjali*,
and gazed at her flawless beauty.

11 Jayadratha, rājā of Sindhu, son of Vṛddhakṣatra,
enchanted, gazed at her,
and impure thoughts
entered his mind.

12 Confused by captivating kāma,
he said to rājā Koṭikāsya:
"Who is this perfect-limbed lady?
Is she human?

13 If I can get this ravishing woman,
I will not marry anyone else.
I will take her with me
to my palace.

14 Go, my friend, and ask her who she is,
from where she comes,
and why she – such lovely eyebrows! –
has come to this thorny forest.

15 Will this slim-waisted perfect beauty
of the world,
with large eyes and lovely teeth,
accept me as her lord?

16 I will be most fulfilled to have
this incomparable beauty for myself.
Go, Koṭika, find out
if she is married."

17 Koṭika, who was wearing *kuṇḍala*-earrings,
alighted from the chariot,
and approached Draupadī
like a jackal approaching a tigress.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIXTY-FIVE

1 "Lovely-eyebrowed lady," said Koṭika,
"who are you that leans
against the *kadamba* branch,
like a tongue of flame
blazing at night,
fanned by the wind?

2 With loveliness like yours,
do you not fear
being alone in the forest?
Are you a devī, a yakṣī,
a Dānava anti-goddess,
or the wife of a Daitya?

3 Or a daughter of the rājā
of *uraga*-serpents,
or a rākṣasa's wife?
Or the wife of Varuṇa,
Yama, or Soma,
or Dhaneśvara-Kubera?

4 Have you come from the place
of Dhātā or Vidhātā,
Savitā Vibhu, or Śakra-Indra?
You never asked about us –
we do not know
who protects you.

5 Gracious lady, we ask
with the deepest respect:
'Who is your father?
Tell us the names
of your husband, your family,
and why you are here.

6 I am the son
of rājā Suratha;
I am Koṭikāsya.
And the man reclining
in that golden chariot,
like fire in a yajña,

7 Is the rājā of Trigarta,
with eyes like lotus-petals;
his name: Kṣemaṅkara.
Behind him is the archer,
the brilliant son
of the king of Kulinda.

8 The large-eyed one
looking towards you
wearing dazzling garlands,
lives on a mountain.
The dark goodlooking man
near the tank,

9 Is the son of king Subala
of the Ikṣvāku dynasty –
a slayer of his enemies.
You will see
that twelve Sauvīra princes
carry his standards.

10 He has six thousand chariots
and horses and elephants.
The names of the princes
are Aṅgāraka, Kuñjara,
Guptaka, Śatruñjaya,
Śañjaya, Supravṛddha,

11 Bhayaṁkara, Bhramara,
Ravi, and Śūra,
Pratapa and Kuhana.
Brown horses pull their chariots,
and they look like the fires
on a yajña-altar.

12 His name is Jayadratha,
he is the radiant
rājā of Sauvīra.
His brothers are the famous
Anika-Vidāraṇa,
Balāhaka and others.

13 These powerful young
heroes of Sauvira
accompany the rājā.
He journeys with them
and with his friends,
as Indra with the Maruts.

14 Lovely-haired lady, tell us,
we are ignorant,
whose daughter are you,
and whose wife?"

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIXTY-SIX

1 Thus addressed by the foremost
of the race of Śibi,
Draupadī modestly
glanced at the speaker,
left the *kadomba*,
adjusted her *kuśa*-dress,

2 And said to the prince,
"I know it is not
proper that I speak;
but there is no one,
no man or woman,
to give you reply.

3 Because I alone am here,
I make this reply.
You surely know
a woman's sva-dharma – alone,
she should not
speak to a stranger.

4 I have learnt, O Śaibya,
you are Suratha's son,
Your name Koṭikāsya.
Let me, therefore,
introduce myself
and my noble race.

5 I am the daughter
of rājā Drupada,
my name is Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.
I have chosen five husbands
who lived in Khāṇḍava –
you probably know them.

6 Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma,
Arjuna, the valiant
twin sons of Mādrī –
leaving me here,
they have gone to the four
directions to hunt,

7 The rājā to the east,
Bhīma to the south,
Arjuna to the west,
the twins to the north.
Time now for the return
of the chariot-heroes.

8 Unharness your carriages,
climb down and rest,
assured of their welcome.
The mahātmā son of Dharma
is gracious to guests,
and will be to you."

9 Saying this to Koṭika,
the daughter of Drupada,
with a moon-lovely face,
recalling the hospitable
nature of her husband,
entered her thatched hut.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIXTY-SEVEN

1 Descendant of Bharata (said Vaiśampāyana),
all the rājās were seated in their chariots
when Koṭika
reported Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's words.

2 The hero of the Sauvīras Jayadratha
said to the Śaibya prince Koṭika:
"What she told you makes me desire her
all the more.

3 Why did you not bring the lovely lady
with you?
Compared to her,
other women look like so many monkeys.

4 O mahā-muscled hero, this is the truth.
From the moment I saw her,
she has completely ravished
my heart.

5 Tell me, O Śaibya,
is she really a human being?"
Koṭika replied,
"She is the illustrious princess Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

6 She is the respected queen
of Pāṇḍu's five sons;
she is honoured and loved
by the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī.

7 Meet her if you wish,
and go back to the land of Sauvīra."
"I wish to see Draupadī,"
said the great

8 King of Sindhu, Sauvīra and other territories,
ill-minded Jayadratha.
Like a wolf
entering a lion's cave,

9 He, with six followers, entered the āshram,
and said to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī:
"Are you well, lovely thighed lady?
Are your husbands well?

10 And are they, who have your good wishes,
also well?"
Draupadī replied, "Rājā, are your kingdom,
treasury and army prospering?

11 And you, who are sovereign of Śibi,
Sauvīra, Sindhu, and other lands –
do you govern them
with dharma?

12 Kuntī's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, of the Kaurava race,
his brothers, myself –
about whom you have enquired –
we are all well.

13 Prince, here is water to wash your feet,
and here is a seat.
I offer fifty deer
to feed your followers.

14 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira will soon
be here,
and offer you wild boar, deer, does, antelopes,
ruru-deer, rabbits,

15 And many other animals,
including rare species of deer and buffalo
and other four-legged
game beasts."

16 "I am satisfied," replied Jayadratha.
"Your offer is enough of a morning meal.
Come with me in my chariot,
and be happy.

17 What do you find in the poor,
mindless sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
dwelling in the forest,
with neither kingdom nor prosperity?

18 You should have more sense than to be faithful
to a poverty-stricken husband.
The sensible woman follows a prosperous husband,
and discards a poor one.

19 Pāṇḍu's sons are finished – they will never recover
their dignity or kingdom.
Why should you take their sufferings
as yours?

20 Graceful-hipped lady, leave them;
be my wife and be happy;
enjoy with me the kingdoms of Sindhu
and Sauvīra."

21 These heart-piercing words
of the rājā of Sindhu
so angered Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī that she frowned,
moving away from him.

22 She tried to ignore them.
Lovely-waisted Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī said: "Saindhava!
Be ashamed!
Do not speak to me again."

23 Hoping that her husbands
would return any moment,
irreproachable Draupadī kept speaking cleverly,
playing for time.

24 "O mahā-muscled hero," she said,
"you are foolish.
You deceive yourself.
You are Pāṇḍu's and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son's

25 Younger sister 's husband.
O mahā-chariot-hero,
this makes you my brother-in-law;
you should protect me.

26 You are born in a family of dharma,
but you seem to be devoid of dharma."
Jayadratha listened to her,
and replied:

27 "You know nothing of the dharma of rājās.
Wise men have said
that women and jewels
are meant for frivolous enjoyment."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIXTY-EIGHT

1 Her lovely face flaming
in righteous anger,
her eyebrows arching,
the daughter of Drupada
continued to declaim
against the king of Sauvīra:

2 "You must be a fool,
who dares to insult those
Indra-like mahā-chariot-heroes
who have not wavered
even when attacked
by yakṣas and rākṣasas.

3 Never speak insultingly
of the learned and of those
who practise tapasyā
at home or in the forest.
Only barking dogs
make fun of these.

4 I do not think any
of the Kṣatriyas here
can hold you by the hand
and pull you out of the ditch
that you have been digging
under your own feet.

5 Defeating Dharmarāja?
It's like taking a twig
and trying to isolate
a mountain-huge, rutting
leader of elephants
from the main herd.

6 You are foolish to rouse
a slumbering lion
in order to pluck
his whiskers, O king.
When pounced on by Bhīma,
you will decamp.

7 Your threat to challenge
Jiṣṇu-Arjuna to combat
is like waking
a mahā-powerful fierce,
full-grown lion
asleep in his cave.

8 Your desire to challenge
the twins, finest of men,
is the act of a fool
who unknowingly treads
on the tails of two black
split-tongued cobras.

9 The bamboo, the reed
and the plantain bear fruit,
only to die.
As the she-crab conceives
and instantly dies,
so will you if you touch me."

10 "I know this," said Jayadratha,
"I know about the Pāṇḍavas.
I know who they are.
Do not try to frighten me.
I will not be put off
by threats, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

11 We also, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
are born in the seventeen-
qualitied noble families,
we have the six guṇas –
and that makes us superior
to even the Pāṇḍavas.

12 So climb on this elephant,
or ride in this chariot,
and don't talk back.
Speak less proudly,
and depend on the mercy
of the Sauvīra rājā."

13 "I am mahā-strong," replied Draupadī,
"yet the rājā of Sauvīra
considers me helpless.
You cannot by force
make me beg and plead
before the rājā of Sauvīra.

14 Even Indra does not dare
molest her who is guarded
by Krishna and Arjuna
riding in the same
chariot together.
And you are nobody!

15 Foe-chasting, diadem-decked
Arjuna, in his chariot,
shall penetrate your army,
strike terror in your soldiers,
destroy all that he sees,
like a grass-consuming fire.

16 Janārdana-Krishna, with the heroic
Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis,
and the mahā-bowmen
of the Kekaya clan,
will search for me
relentlessly everywhere.

17 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's arrows,
shot from the Gāṇḍīva
with the strength of his arms,
whistle through the air
like deadly missiles
of incredible energy.

18 When you see them speeding
like a swarm of locusts,
discharged by Arjuna,
then you will recall
your gross misbehaviour
and regret your folly.

19 When he blows his conch
and repeatedly twangs
with horrendous noise
his uplifted Gāṇḍīva,
and aims at your chest,
what will you feel then?

20 Scoundrel! When you see Bhīma
advance with his mace,
and the twin sons of Mādrī
spitting the poison
of their righteous anger,
then you will repent.

21 Not even in thought
have I ever been faithless
to my noble husbands;
that alone entitles me
to see you punished
by the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī.

22 No matter how brutal
you are, you cannot
keep me by force.
When the Pāṇḍavas return,
they will certainly take
me back to Kāmyaka."

23 She saw them preparing
to seize her by force.
The large-eyed lady,
terrified, said, "Don't touch me!
Don't!" and screamed
for purohita Dhaumya.

24 Jayadratha attempted
to remove her breast-garment;
she pushed the scoundrel
with such great force
that he fell on the ground
like an uprooted tree.

25 But he rose and dragged Kṛṣṇā-
Draupadī again and again;
panting, sighing, the princess
touched Dhaumya's feet
before Jayadratha pulled her
inside his chariot.

26 "You cannot take her away," Dhaumya said,
"without first defeating
the mahā-chariot-hero Pāṇḍavas.
Such is the ancient Kṣatriya-dharma, Jayadratha.

27 The fruits of this heinous crime
will be on your head
when the Pāṇḍavas, led by Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
track you down."

28 Saying this (Vaiśampāyana continued),
Dhaumya followed the abducted princess,
illustrious Draupadī, on foot,
mingling with the soldiers of Jayadratha's army.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIXTY-NINE

1 The Pāṇḍavas, spread out
in the four directions,
killed many deer
and buffaloes and boars
in the course of their hunt
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

2 In that huge forest,
abundant in deer
and other wild game,
resounding with bird-cries
and beast-calls, Yudhiṣṭhira
said to his brothers:

3 "See the excited birds
and the animals running
in the western region –
it must be that strangers
have entered the mahā-forest,
planning on mischief.

4 Let us stop immediately.
Let the hunt cease.
I have a headache.
My mind's all blurred,
my very life
seems to be fading.

5 And the Kāmyaka-forest
seems to me like
a lake whose serpents
are devoured by Suparṇa-Garuda,
like a vessel whose contents
are drunk by the thirsty,
like a kingdom whose rājā
and whose glowing prosperity
have strangely vanished."

6 The heroes drove swiftly
in their excellent chariots
to the Kāmyaka āshram;
their horses of the Saindhava
breed were swifter
even than storm-winds.

7 On their left they noticed
a jackal who howled
weirdly and constantly.
Marking this carefully,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira advised
Bhīma and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna:

8 “This low-born jackal,
slinking on our left,
speaks in a language
that hints that the Kauravas
have started their campaign
of harassment and violence.”

9 Abandoning the hunt,
they entered the peaceful
grove of the āshram.
They saw Dhātreyikā,
Draupadī’s maid,
piteously sobbing.

10 Alighting from their chariots,
they quickly approached
the grief-stricken girl.
The first to reach her
was Indrasena, who asked
sobbing Dhātreyikā:

11 “What is the matter?
Why are you sobbing?
Why do you look
so dried-up and pale?
Has some vicious scoundrel
molested princess Draupadī?

12 She is inconceivably lovely,
the large-eyed lady,
she is the second self
of each bull-brave Kuru Pāṇḍava.
Were that devī anywhere on earth,
in sky or in ocean,

13 Dharma’s son Yudhiṣṭhira
and his brothers would instantly
go and search her out.
Who is the fool
who has dared to insult
the foe-crushing heroes,

14 The victorious Pāṇḍavas,
by stealing a jewel
more precious than life to them?
Who does not know
she has heroes for husbands
who love her deeply?

15 Whose is the body
that, pierced with arrows,
will today lie dead?
Do not cry, gentle one.
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī will return
to you – and today.

16 Killing all their foes,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
will recover their wife Yājñasenī."
Wiping her tears,
lovely faced Dhātreyikā
said to the charioteer Indrasena:

17 "Insulting her five
Indra-like husbands,
Jayadratha abducted
Draupadī – the road
he took is where
the branches have snapped.

18 O Indra-like princes!
Follow her – save the princess!
She cannot be far!
Put on your mahā-armours,
and ride in your chariots
and rescue her at once.

19 Take your precious quivers,
and hurry and save her!
Who knows – overpowered
by her brutish captor,
unable to defend herself –
dry-mouthed with fear,

20 She may succumb
to this atrocious man,
like a sacred oblation
wasted on ashes.
Let not good ghee
be poured on cheap fire,
let not a garland
of lovely flowers
be flung on the pyre.

21 Let not the soma-juice
of a yajña be lapped up
by a dog because the priest
has been careless, let no jackal
prowling in the forest
defile a lotus pond.

22 Let no scoundrel's lips
touch the face of your wife,
lovely like the moon,
sweet-eyed and straight-nosed,
like a dog licking ghee
in a sacrificial vessel.
Go quickly and save her,
let no time be wasted
on this urgent mission."

23 "Shut up!" said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Control your tongue, good woman!
Princes or rājās,
who are proud of their power
and bloated with ego,
will surely be humbled."

24 Saying this, they left,
following the road
indicated to them;
they twanged their-mahā bows,
and sighed snake-sighs,
long and deep.

25 They spotted the dust
of the hooves of the horses
of Jayadratha's army;
they saw Dhaumya lamenting
in the midst of the troops;
and Bhīma rode ahead.

26 Overtaking Dhaumya,
they shouted, "Go back!"
in order to console him.

27 They swooped on the troops
like hawks plunging
swiftly on their prey.

28 The Indra-strong Pāṇḍavas,
enraged at the insult
to Yājñasenī-Draupadī,
were even more roused
seeing their wife and Jayadratha
seated in his chariot.

29 Bhīma, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
the twins and the rājā
shouted at Jayadratha
to halt his chariot.
The soldiers, bewildered,
lost all sense of direction.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY

1 Seeing Arjuna and Bhīma
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
the fierce Kṣatriyas of the army
set up a loud screaming in the forest.

2 Seeing the pennants
of the charging Pāṇḍavas,
ill-ātmaned Jayadratha
panicked, and turning
to Yājñasenī-Draupadī, who shone
in his chariot, he asked:

3 “Five heroes are coming,
very likely your husbands.
Lovely-haired Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
you who know them
so well, can you tell me
who rides in which chariot?”

4 “Fool,” replied Draupadī,
“what use is it now,
after fatal error, to know
the names of these mahā-bowmen?
When my husbands arrive,
you will all die.

5 Still, since you ask me,
on the verge of your death,
dharma dictates
that I should reply.
Seeing Dharmarāja coming,
I have shed fear and pain.

6 At whose flagstaff you see
two resonant *mṛdaṅgas,*
Nanda and Upananda,
constantly being drummed –
he knows his sva-dharma.
He leads the successful.

7 His skin is the colour of
Jāmbū gold – his long nose,
large eyes and slim frame
show him as Yudhiṣṭhira,
Dharma’s son and my husband,
a most excellent Kaurava.

8 He abides by dharma,
sheltering even enemies.
I advised you, fool,
to give up your weapons,
and beg him for mercy
with folded palms.

9 Seated in the chariot,
mahā-muscled and tall
as a *śāla*-tree,
lip-biting, forehead furrowed
till the eyebrows meet,
is my wolf-waisted husband.

10 He is large, mahā-powerful,
his deeds are superhuman,
he is known on earth
by the name of Bhīma.
Superbly trained mighty horses
are pulling his chariot.

11 No one stays alive
who dares offend him –
he never forgets injury.
One way or other
he takes revenge,
and still is not satisfied.

12 Best among bowmen,
intelligent illustrious, disciplined,
respectful to elders,
third brother and disciple
of Yudhiṣṭhira, is Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
my heroïc husband.

13 Neither kāma nor greed
nor anger prevents him
from pursuing dharma.
Never cruel, he is radiant
like the Vaiśvānara fire,
and he crushes his foes.

14 Proficient in dharma
and artha, and remover
of the fears of the fearful,
protected by all
the sons of Pāṇḍu
more dearly than life,

15 Dedicated and devoted,
is my husband Nakula.
With him is Sahadeva,
mahā-intelligent, second to none,
amazingly dexterous
in handling sword.

16 You will see today
his exploits which resemble
Indra's against the anti-gods.
Intelligent and wise,
heroic, devoted, brave,
to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira

17 Shining moon-like and sun-like,
youngest and favoured
of the five Pāṇḍavas,
with none to equal him
in intelligence or even
in the gift of eloquence,

18 Reghteous in wrath,
is my husband Sahadeva.
He will jump into fire,
he will give up his life
than be guilty of doing
anything against dharma.

19 So noble is Sahadeva,
so precise in his following
of the dharma of Kṣatriyas,
that Kuntī loves him more
than her own life.
When the sons of Pāṇḍu
attack, you will sink
like a jewel-laden ship
struck by a *makara*-whale.

20 Now I have told you
all about the prowess
of the Pāṇḍavas whom
you have foolishly insulted.
You are lucky indeed
if you escape now."

21 Pṛthā-Kuntī's five sons,
each like an Indra,
ignored the soldiers
pleading for mercy,
and clouded the chariots
with showers of arrows.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-ONE

1 Sindhu's rājā Jayadratha
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
shouted orders to his army leaders:
"Halt!" "Strike!" "March!"

2 When the soldiers saw Bhīma, Arjuna,
Yudhiṣṭhira
and the twin brothers attacking them,
they began shouting too.

3 Seeing the fierce tiger-like heroes
charging down on them,
the Śibi, Sauvīra, and Sindhu warriors
panicked.

4 Wielding a mace made out of Śaikya iron
and plated with gold,
Bhīma attacked
the Kāla-doomed Sindhu king.

5 But they succeeded in encircling
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
through a manoeuvre of Koṭikāsya's
that intercepted Bhīma.

6 But Bhīma stood his ground,
though a hail of śakti-spears, *tomara*-lances,
nārāca-arrows and other missiles
were showered on him.

7 With his mace he shattered
an elephant and its driver
and fourteen foot-soldiers
guarding Jayadratha's chariot.

8 Intent on capturing the Sauvīra king,
Arjuna killed
five hundred mountain mahā-chariot-heroes guarding
Saindhava-Jayadratha's rear.

9 And rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, in a flash,
succeeded in killing
a hundred of the finest
Sauvīra warriors.

10 And Nakula leapt from his chariot,
sword in hand,
slicing the rear soldiers' heads
like a sower scattering seeds.

11 Sahadeva shot his *nārāca*-arrows
from his chariot,
cutting down elephant warriors
like birds toppling from trees.

12 From his mahā-chariot,
the rājā of Trigarta, Suratha,
bow in hand, killed Yudhiṣṭhira's four horses
with his mace.

13 Seeing his enemy so dangerously near,
and fighting on foot,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira grazed Suratha's chest
with a crescent arrow.

14 Hit in the chest, the hero vomited blood
and collapsed on the ground
like an uprooted tree
beside Yudhiṣṭhira.

15 His horses slain, Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
with Indrasena,
abandoned his chariot and climbed
into Sahadeva's mahā-chariot.

16 Picking on Nakula, the two heroes
Kṣemankara and Mahamukha
cornered him with sharp,
well-aimed arrows.

17 The son of Mādrī, however,
with exactly two arrows
killed the two heroes who had showered
an arrow-swarm on him.

18 Blocking Nakula's chariot,
Suratha, the rājā of Trigarta,
expert elephant-warrior, prodded his elephant
to crush the chariot.

19 Apprehensive, Nakula leapt out of his chariot
and stood, rock-firm,
shield and sword in hand,
waiting.

20 Eager to finish off Nakula at once,
Suratha goaded
his massive, maddened elephant
to charge with upraised trunk.

21 But Nakula was able to sever
both trunk and tusks
from the elephant's head
with one sweep of his sword.

22 The armour-protected elephant,
trumpeting in mahā-agony,
fell in a colossal heap,
crushing its driver under it.

23 The mahā-chariot-hero son of Mādrī,
briefly relieved by this mahā-feat,
climbed into Bhīma's chariot
and rested there.

24 Bhīma saw rājā Koṭikāsya
rushing into battle,
and with a horse-shoe arrow
cut off his charioteer's head.

25 Rājā Koṭikāsya did not even realise
his charioteer was slain.
The horses, without a driver,
ran wild on the battlefield.

26 Finest of heroes, the Pāṇḍava Bhīma,
fired a bearded arrow
at the driverless prince
on the runaway chariot.

27 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, shooting sharp *bhalla*-arrows,
cut off
their bows and beheaded
twelve Sauvīra heroes.

28 The wonderful chariot warrior fired arrows
that slaughtered
large numbers of Śibis, Trigartas, Saindhavas
and Īkṣvākus.

29 Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
was responsible for the destruction
of many flag-carrying elephants
and standard-bearing chariots.

30 On the battlefield could be seen,
covering the entire ground,
heads without bodies
and bodies without heads.

31 Dogs, jackals, herons, crows, ravens, falcons,
vultures and jackals
feasted on the flesh and blood
of the slain heroes.

32 Seeing his army routed, the Sindhu-rājā Jayadratha
in terror tried to escape
from the battlefield,
leaving Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī behind.

33 He flung her on the ground;
in desperate confusion fearing for his life,
the scoundrel fled, taking the same path
by which he came.

34 Seeing Draupadī and Dhaumya limping back,
Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira
assisted them
into the chariot of Mādrī's son Sahadeva.

35 After the flight of Jayadratha,
wolf-waisted Bhīma called out
the names of enemies,
and slew them with his *nārāca*-arrows.

36 Ambidexterous Arjuna noticed that Jayadratha
had fled from the field,
and he called on Bhīma to stop
slaughtering the Saindhava fugitives.

37 "I do not see Jayadratha anywhere,"
said Arjuna.
"It was his wicked deed that led
to his unfortunate massacre.

38 Find him! And may you succeed!
Why kill these soldiers?
What is the point in uselessly butchering
the innocent?"

39 Bhīma listened to the argument
of intelligent curly-haired Gudākeśa-Arjuna
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
turned to Yudhiṣṭhira and said:

40 "Most of the enemy's heroes are dead;
and others have fled, O rājā.
So take Draupadī with you,
and return home.

41 O Indra-among-rājās!
I suggest you go to the āshram,
and, with mahātmā Dhaumya and the twins,
console Draupadī.

42 As for me, I shall not rest
until I find
that stupid Saindhava king
even if he hides
in the sub-world of Pātāla,
or has Śakra-Indra as his charioteer."

43 Mahā-muscled Bhīma," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"remember our sister Duḥśalā
and illustrious Gāndhāri,
and spare the ill-atmaned Sindhu-king."

44 When Draupadī heard this (Vaiśampāyana continued),
she lost her temper;
the modest, intelligent lady
said to her husbands Bhīma and Arjuna:

45 "If you care at all to please me,
that vicious, race-defiling,
mean and lustful rascal of the Sindhus
must be killed.

46 The enemy who abducts one's wife
or steals one's kingdom
can never be forgiven,
even if he begs for mercy."

47 The two tiger-like heroes set out to search
for Jayadratha.
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, with the *purohita* Dhaumya,
took her to the āshram.

48 They entered the āshram
and saw it graced
with the presences of the ascetics and disciples
of Mārkaṇḍeya.

49 All the Brahmins were lamenting
the abduction of Draupadi
when mahā-wise Yudhiṣṭhira, his wife, and his brothers
entered.

50 And the Brahmins were overjoyed
seeing them return,
with Draupadī safe,
after defeating the Sindhus and the Sauvīras.

51 They surrounded the Pāṇḍavas;
and rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
sat with them, while lovely Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
and the twins went inside.

52 Learning that Jayadratha had gone
about a *krośa*-shout ahead,
Bhima and Arjuna speedily
gave chase.

53 Heroic Arjuna,
by a magnificent feat of archery,
killed the horses of Jayadratha
from a distance of one *krośa.*

54 He had celestial missiles with him.
Nothing deterred him.
In crises he performed stupendous feats
with mantra-charged weapons.

55 The two heroes Bhīma and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
rushed at the isolated,
fear-stricken, bewildered, horseless king
of the Sindhus.

56 When he saw his horses slain
by that incredible feat
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
Jayadratha was sorely troubled.

57 He determined to escape by the same path
that he had come.
Seeing the Sindhu king
sprinting for his life,

58 Mahā-muscled Phālguna-Arjuna pursued him,
and shouted,
"Brave one, what made you use force
on a woman?

59 Stop, prince!
Do you think it fits your dignity
to scuttle away and leave your followers
to your enemies?"

60 Jayadratha heard the words of Arjuna,
but continued to flee.
Bhīma ran forward, shouting, "Stop! Stop!"
and overtook him.
Merciful Pārtha-Arjuna
said, "Don't kill him."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-TWO

1 Seeing the two brothers charging at him
with brandished weapons,
Jayadratha, who loved life,
desperately took to his heels.

2 But Bhīma jumped from his chariot
and outstripped him;
Bhima seized the panicky Jayadratha
by the hair of his head.

3 Bhima lifted him by his hair
and flung him against the ground,
then he gripped his head,
and clouted the rājā.

4 Jayadratha, half-conscious,
tried to rise slowly,
but mahā-muscled Bhīma kicked him
on his forehead.

5 Bhīma pummelled his chest
with kicks and blows;
so viciously that rājā Jayadratha
lost consciousness.

6 Phālguna-Arjuna stepped in, and stopped Bhīma
by reminding him
of what rājā Yudhiṣṭhira had said
about Duḥśalā.

7 "This foolish criminal," and Bhīma,
"dared to insult Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
who is blameless;
he does not deserve to live.

8 But what can I do?
The rājā is forgiving,
and you, too, with your childish kindness,
are preventing me."

9 Saying this, wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
which a crescent-shaped arrow,
shaved off silent Jayadratha's head,
leaving five tufts.

10 Wolf-waisted Bhīma said
to the humiliated rājā:
"Fool, if you want to live,
listen to what I say.

11 In meetings and sabhās
confess that you are our slave.
I will then spare you.
This is the way of the victorious."

12 Cringing Rājā Jayadratha said
to the lion-among-men,
glory-of-the-battlefield Bhima,
"I will do so."

13 Pārtha-Arjuna and Vṛkodara-Bhīma
lifted the semi-conscious,
dust-smeared king of the Sindhus
into their chariot.

14 Dumping him inside the chariot,
Bhīma, with Arjuna following,
reached the āshram
and approached Yudhiṣṭhira.

15 Bhīma displayed Jayadratha cowering
in the chariot.
Rājā-Yudhiṣṭhira saw him, smiled, and said,
"Set him free."

16 Bhīma replied to the rājā,
"First inform Draupadī
that the Pāṇḍavas have made this scoundrel
their slave."

17 The eldest brother of the Pāṇḍavas
said gently to Bhima:
"If you care for me at all,
set him free."

18 Draupadī looked at Yudhiṣṭhira
and said to Bhīma:
"Let the rājā's slave go
with his five disfiguring hair-tufts."

19 O rājā! He was freed; he bowed to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira;
then he approached the munis
and, one by one,
paid his respects to them.

20 Yudhiṣṭhira saw that Savyasācī-Arjuna
was supporting disgraced Jayadratha;
the tolerant son of Dharma
said to Jayadratha:

21 "Go, you are now free,
Never do an act like this again.
Shame on you! –
using force on a woman!

22 Who else but scoundrelly you would even think
of doing something like this again?
Your dharma-repungnant deed
will be an eternal shame."
Jayadratha seemed so stricken
with shame and remorse

23 Then the excellent Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira,
showing compassion,
said, "Fix your mind on dharma,
never on adharma.

24 Take your soldiers, charioteers and cavalry,
and go, you are safe, Jayadratha."
Jayadratha, repentant,
bowed his head, O rājā,

25 And sorrowfully proceeded
to the source of the Gaṅgā.
There he sought the grace of Virūpākṣa,
Umā's lord Śiva.

26 He practised the severest tapasya
and bull-bannered Śiva was pleased.
The three-eyed deity Trilocana-Śiva
appeared before Jayadratha

27 And bestowed a boon on him.
Jayadratha said:
"Give me the power to defeat Pāṇḍu's five sons
in battle."

28 These were the rājā's words,
but the god Śiva replied:
"No, that cannot be.
You cannot defeat the invincible.

29 You will be able to check four of them,
but not Arjuna, who is the mahā-muscled one,
the gods' lord Nara, helped by Nārāyaṇa,
and who did tapasyā at Badarī.

30 Even the gods cannot conquer him.
I gave him
the celestial Pāśupata-missile,
and from the world-guardians, the Lokapālas,
he obtained the thunderbolt
and other mahā-weapons.

31 The guru of the gods, the Ultimate Ātman,
the god of gods Viṣṇu,
is the Great Purusa, the World-Ātman,
the World-Formed.

32 At yuga-end, he became the fire
of all-consuming Kāla,
devouring mountains, oceans, islands,
hills and forests.

33 After he consumed the realm of the nāgas
who populate,
the subterranean Pātāla-world,
massive multi-coloured clouds

34 Appeared, reverberating in the sky;
lightnings flashed,
illuminating the main directions;
torrential rains fell,

35 And covering all the quarters
of the earth
with showers thick as chariot-axles,
they extinguished the flames.

36 The earth was submerged in water,
like one vast ocean;
all moving and unmoving life perished;
sun, moon, and winds
disappeared
along with planets and stars.

37 This happened at the end
of four thousand yugas.
Then the mighty Nārāyaṇa,
thousand-eyed-and-eared,

38 Thousand-headed, the eternal Puruṣa,
desired to repose.
The awesome serpent Śeṣa,
with its thousand hoods,

39 Dazzling with the effulgence
of ten thousand suns,
pure white like the *kunda*-flower
or the moon
or the white lotus, or milk, –
Śeṣa became his couch;

40 And the Lord Divinity Bhagavān
reposed on the bosom of the waters,
shrouding the worlds
with night's devouring darkness.

41 Waking from that sleep,
he saw the universe void.
There is a śloka about this
concerning Nārāyaṇa:

42 *Since* nara-*water was the body*
of Nara,
he is called Nara;
Since he rested on water,
he is Nārāyaṇa.

43 When the Deity contemplated
the possibility of creation,
an eternal lotus blossomed from the navel
of Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa;

44 From the lotus in the navel
emerged four-faced Brahmā –
the Divine Grand-cestor of all creatures,
ensconced in a lotus.

45 He saw the worlds void,
and he created from his mind
the nine mahā-ṛṣis –
Marīci and others.

46 They in turn created the yakṣas,
rākṣasas, *piśācas,*
uraga-reptiles, humans,
and all moving and unmoving life.

47 Brahmā as creator generates;
Puruṣa-Viṣṇu preserves,
and Rudra-Śiva destroys –
these are the three aspects of Prajāpati.

48 King of Sindhu, have you not heard
of the marvellous feats of Viṣṇu
sung by munis
and Veda-knowing Brahmins?

49 When the worlds were one vast sheet
of water,
with a vast expanse of sky above,
like a firely

50 On a monsoon night,
the Lord moved
seeking a place of permanent repose
from where to begin re-creating.

51 He saw the earth submerged totally,
and decided to redeem it:
What form shall I assume
to save the earth?

52 With deep insight and divine wisdom,
he decided to assume
the shape of a boar
that delights in water.

53 So, becoming a sacrificial boar,
shining with the wisdom of the Vedas,
ten *yojanas* wide,
and a hundred *yojanas* long,

54 Massive as a mountain, with sharp tusks,
with a roar
as thunderous as that of storm-clouds,
and a dark-blue body,

55 The Lord entered the waters and,
as the yajña-boar,
he lifted the earth with one tusk
and re-positioned it.

56 Then he assumed the incredible form
of half-man and half-lion
and, rubbing his hands,
the mahā-armed Lord

57 Went to the court
of the Indra-of-the-Daityas.
The primal chief of the Daityas,
Diti's son, foe of the gods,

58 Hiraṇyakśipu, seeing that weird form,
was furious;
his eyes flamed;
he lifted his gigantic spear.

59 The garland-adorned enemy
of the gods
rushed on the man-lion
like a mass of dark clouds.

60 The half-man-half-lion king of beasts
confronted him
and ripped him open
with his sharp claws.

61 Killing the Indra-of-the-Daityas,
the lotus-eyed *bhagavān* of the worlds
took various births
for the worlds' welfare.

62 He was born as Kaśyapa's son
in Āditi's womb;
she gave birth to the excellent son
after a thousand years.

63 He was diminutive, bright-eyed,
and rain-cloud-skinned.
He carried a staff and the water pot
called Kamaṇḍalu,
and on his chest was the mystic
Śrīvatsa-mark

64 Śrīmān Bhagavān Vāmana had matted hair,
he wore the sacred thread round his neck,
he approached the yajña ground
of the Indra-of-the-Dānavas.

65 With Bṛhaspati's help,
he entered the sacrificial place of Bali.
Bali saw the dwarf,
and laughed loudly.

66 "I am pleased to have your darshan, Brahmin,"
he said.
"What do you want?"
The dwarf replied to Bali:

67 "May you prosper!"
Then, smiling, he said:
"Dānava lord, give me three footsteps
of land."

68 Bali gladly gave the radiant Brahmin
what he wanted.
While measuring the land,
Hari assumed a wondrous celestial form.

69 His three footsteps straddled
the whole earth,
which Sanātana Viṣṇu then gave
to Śakra-Indra.

70 What I have told you
is about the Dwarf Mainfestation;
he created the gods,
and the Viṣṇu-pervaded universe.

71 And he has now taken birth among men
in the race of the Yādavas
for the suppression of the false and unreal,
for the preservation of dharma.

72 Bhagavān Viṣṇu is now called Krishna.
That unborn,
without-beginning-or-end Deity
is the world's namaskara-ed Adored One.

73 Saindhava-Jayadratha! I have described
some of his achievements,
as the wise do. He carries the conch,
cakra and mace,

74 He possesses the mystic Śrīvatsa-mark,
he is dressed in yellow silk;
he is the Krishna who protects
weapons-expert Arjuna.

75 This gracious, lotus-eyed, incomparable
Śrīmān Deity kills his foes
and helps Pārtha-Arjuna
by riding in the same chariot.

76 No matter how hard they try,
even the gods cannot defeat Pārtha-Arjuna –
how can mere mortals
hope to do so?

77 O rājā! Leaving aside Arjuna,
you will be able to defeat –
but only for a day –
Yudhiṣṭhira's army and the four Pāṇḍavas."

78 All-destroying Hara-Śiva said this
to king Jayadratha; then,
Umā's lord, Paśupati, Dakṣa-yajña-ruiner,
slayer of the anti-god Tripura,

79 He who gouged out the eyes of Bhaga,
Śiva,
followed by a horde of fearful,
hunchbacked followers,

80 Who had awesome eyes and ears
and brandished uplifed weapons, –
Trayambaka-Śiva vanished
along with his consort Umā.

81 The ill-ātmaned king Jayadratha
also returned to his palace.
The Pāṇḍavas continued
their Kāmyaka-exile.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-THREE

1 "Suffering so much as a result
of Draupadī's abduction,"
said Janamejaya,
"what did the tigers-among-men Pāṇḍavas do?"

2 Freeing Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī after capturing Jayadratha
(Vaiśampāyana replied),
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira sat down beside
the āshram munis.

3 All the mahā-ṛṣis there were sympathising
with him,
and the descendant of Pāṇḍu turned
and said to Mārkaṇḍeya:

4 "*Bhagavan,* revered one,
it is said that among the deva-ṛṣis
you know most about past, present and future.
Something has been troubling my heart.

5 Drupada's mahā-fortune-favoured daughter was born
from a sacrificial altar;
the radiant daughter-in-law of Pāṇḍu
is not womb-born.

6 I think Bhagavān Kāla and Daiva-Destiny,
under Divinity's guidance,
determine the course of life,
and cannot be escaped.

7 How otherwise explain the insult to our wife
who knows dharma and who follows dharma.
It's like accusing
an honest man of theft.

8 Draupadī has not done anything mean
or despicable;
she has practised the highest dharma
with Brahmins.

9 The foolish rājā Jayadratha dared
to abduct her,
and his punishment was
he had his hair shaved off,

10 And suffered an ignominious defeat
with his soldiers.
It is true that we rescued Draupadi
after killing his troops.

11 This disgrace of our wife being abducted
is a disgrace on us –
we were careless. This exile is painful –
we live by hunting,

12 We live in the forest, and we harm
the creatures of the forest.
Our exile is the doing
of our scheming relatives.

13 Is there anyone in the world
as unfortunate as I am?
Have you heard of such a man?
Have you seen one?"

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-FOUR

1 O bull-brave Bharata (said Mārkaṇḍeya),
Rāma was one who suffered grievously
when his wife Jānakī-Śita
was abducted by Rāvaṇa,

2 Wicked-ātmaned Rāvaṇa, that Indra-among-rākṣasas,
using māyā,
killed the vulture Jaṭāyu,
and ravished Śitā from her āshram.

3 Rāma constructed a bridge over the ocean
and burnt down Laṅkā
with fiery arrows,
rescuing Śitā with Sugrīva's help.

4 "In what family was Rāma born?"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira.
"What was his prowess? Whose son was Rāvaṇa?"
Why did he hate Rāma?

5 *Bhagavan,* revered one, tell me all this
in detail.
I am eager to hear the story
of incomparable Rāma."

6 In the race of the Ikṣvākus was a mahā-rājā
named Aja (said Mārkaṇḍeya).
His son was Daśaratha,
devoted to the pursuit of knowledge,

7 Who had four sons,
all proficient in dharma and artha:
Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa,
Śatrughna and mahā-powerful Bharata.

8 Rāma's mother was Kausalyā,
Bharata's Kaikeyī;
Sumitrā was the mother of Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna,
both foe-crushing heroes.

9 Janaka was the rājā of Videha,
his daughter Sitā.
The Divine Maker Tvaṣṭṛ created her
to be Rāma's beloved queen.

10 So much for the background of Rāma and Śitā;
O lord of men,
let me now give you the birth-details
of Rāvaṇa.

11 The Self-Born Creator, the Lord of creatures,
mahā-tapasyā-practising Prajāpati
is the grandfather
of king Rāvaṇa.

12 Prajāpati's favourite mind-born son
was called Pulastya,
who had a great son, born of a cow,
named Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera.

13 Vaiśravaṇa left his father
and went to his grandfather.
Pulastya, angered, created a second being
from himself,

14 Named Viśravas. He created Viśravas
in a fit of anger,
as half of himself, in order to teach
Vaiśravaṇa a lesson.

15 But the grandfather Prajāpati,
pleased with Vaiśravaṇa,
granted him immortality, all wealth,
and world-gardianship,

16 The friendship of Īśāna,
and a son called Nalakubara.
For him he built the rākṣasa-guarded capital,
Laṅkā.

17 The Lord gave him a will-propelled chariot
called Puṣpaka,
sovereignty of the yakṣas,
and authority over all rājās.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE

1 The muni Viśravas,
produced of half of Pulastya
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya),
harboured anger for Vaiśravaṇa.

2 When the lord of rākṣasas, Kubera,
discovered his father was angry with him,
he made attempts
to please him.

3 That rājā-of-rājās of Laṇkā,
carried on the shoulders of men,
despatched three rākṣasīs
to attend on his father.

4 O tiger-brave Bharata, they were proficient
in singing and dancing,
and devoted to the service and satisfaction
of the mahātmā ṛṣi.

5 O rājā! Lord of the world!
Puṣpotkaṭā, Rākā, and Mālinī
were the three slender-waisted girls
who competed in trying to please him.

6 The mahātmā, gratified with them,
granted them boons –
each would have the world-guarding sons
she desired.

7 By Puṣpotkaṭā he had two sons,
both rākṣasa lords,
both unmatched in prowess –
Kumbhakarṇa and ten-headed Rāvaṇa.

8 By Mālinī he had one son called Vibhīṣaṇa;
and by Rākā
he had a son Khara,
and a daughter Śūrpanakhā.

9 Vibhīṣaṇa was the handsomest
of them all;
he was deeply attached to dharma
and performed various sacred rites.

10 The ten-headed rākṣasa Rāvaṇa
became the most powerful – truly bull-brave –
he possessed mahā-vitality,
mahā-strength and mahā-valour.

11 Kumbhakarṇa was physically
the most remarkable –
and the greatest in battle –
he was a massive, fierce master of māyā.

12 Khara was excellent in archery;
he was an eater of raw flesh;
he hated Brahmins, and Śūrpanakhā
excelled in obstructing perfection-seekers.

13 All these Veda-learned personalities,
who kept the traditional vows;
lived with their father
on Gandhamādana peak.

14 One day they saw Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera
sitting with their father,
surrounded by wealth
and borne on the shoulders of men.

15 Stricken by jealousy, they decided
to devote themselves to the strictest tapasyā.
Their severe tapasyā
pleased Brahmā immensely.

16 Daśagrīva-Rāvaṇa subsisted only on air
in the presence of the five sacred fires.
He stood on one leg
for a thousand years.

17 Kumbhakarṇa slept on the bare earth
and, restricting his diet,
engaged in penance. Vibhīṣana subsisted
only on dry leaves.

18 He made his mind firm on fasting.
He devoted himself
to *japa*-chanting and meditation,
practising tapasyā for a long period.

19 Khara and Śūrpanakhā cheerfully
attended on them,
and cared for them while they engaged
in devout tapasyā.

20 A thousand years passed;
ten-headed Daśānana-Rāvaṇa sliced off his heads
and offered them as sacrifice,
pleasing the World-Deity, Jagat-Prabhu.

21 Brahmā personally appeared before them
and ended their tapasyā
by agreeing to grant each
a separate boon.

22 "You have gratified me," said Brahmā.
"Stop the tapasyā,
and ask for boons, my sons,
anything except immortality.

23 Because, desiring power,
you cast your heads in the fire,
they will again adorn your body,
satisfying your wishes.

24 You will not be disfigured
in any way,
you will be able to assume any form,
you will defeat your foes."

25 "Grant that I never suffer defeat,"
said Ravaṇa,
"at the hands of gandharvas, gods,
Kinnaras, anti-gods,
yakṣas, rākṣasas, serpents,
and *bhūta*-spirits."

26 Brahmā replied: "You need not fear
any of these –
fear only humans. This is my boon.
May you prosper!"

27 Ten-headed Rāvaṇa exulted
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya);
the warped mind of man-eating Rāvaṇa
despised humans.

28 Brahmā Pitāmaha granted Kumbhakarṇa a boon –
and all
that *tamas*-clouded being wanted
was mahā-interminable slumber.

29 “You will have it,” said Brahmā,
and turned to Vibhīṣaṇa, and said repeatedly:
“My son, you have pleased me –
what is your wish?”

30 “Even in the worst crisis,”
Vibhīṣaṇa said,
“grant that I never deviate into adharma.
Bhagavan, revered one,
I am not learned, yet grant me
knowledge of the Brahmā-missile.”

31 Brahmā replied: “O foe-crusher!
Because you are not inclined to adharma,
I grant you *cirañjīvi*-immortality,
though you are born a rākṣasa.”

32 With his boon, ten-headed Ravaṇa routed
his brother Vaiśravaṇa-Dhaneśvara-Kubera
in battle, and usurped the kingdom
of Laṅkā.

33 Bhagavān Vaiśravaṇa left Laṅkā
and, with a following
of gandharvas, yakṣas, rākṣasas and Kimpuruṣas,
went to Gandhamādana.

34 Rāvaṇa forced him to surrender
his chariot Puṣpaka,
but Vaiśravaṇa then cursed him –
“This will never carry you –

35 It will carry him who will kill you
in war –
because you have insulted me who am elder,
you will soon die.”

36 Mahārāja, dharmātmā Vibhīṣaṇa,
following the noble path,
radiating with glory,
decided to take Vaiśravaṇa’s side.

37 Pleased with the conduct of his younger brother,
percipient lord-of-wealth Dhaneśvara-Vaiśravaṇa
installed him as the general
of his yakṣas and rākṣasas.

38 The cannibal rākṣasas and mahā-powerful *piśācas*
convened an assembly
and proclaimed ten-headed Rāvaṇa
their rājā.

39 And hugely powerful, ten-headed,
any-shape-assuming,
sky-coursing Rāvaṇa attacked and looted
the gods and Daitya anti-gods.

40 He made all creatures tremble,
so he was called Rāvaṇa the Shuddersome One
With his will-power he terrified
even the gods.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-SIX

1 The Brahmā-ṛṣis, Siddhas, and deva-ṛṣis,
taking the Fire-Deity Havyavāhana
as their spokesman, sought Brahmā's refuge
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya).

2 "The mahā-powerful ten-headed
son of Viśravas,"
Agni said, "has been made invincible
by your boon.

3 He harasses and oppresses all creatures
in various ways.
Bhagavan!Revered one! Save us!
There is no one but you who can save us."

4 "Vibhāvaso-Agni," replied Brahmā,
"neither gods nor anti-gods can kill him –
but his end is near –
I have ordained it so.

5 On my urging, the four-armed Deity
has already been designated
for this purpose –
foe-crushing Viṣṇu will fulfil this karma.

6 The Grandcestor of creatures said to Śakra-Indra
in their presence:
"Take birth on earth also,
along with all the gods.

7 Beget on she-bears and she-monkeys
such powerful, any-shape-assuming sons
as will come
to the assistance of Viṣṇu."

8 The gods, gandharvas and nāgas
quickly assembled to decide
how they would fulfil their roles
in earth-births.

9 Brahmā, in their presence, granted a boon
to a gandharva-girl Dundubhi,
saying,
"Go, fulfil your mission."

10 She heard the command
of Brahmā Pitāmaha
and took birth on earth
as the hunchbacked woman Mantharā.

11 All the major gods, including Śakra-Indra,
had intercourse
with she-monkeys and she-bears,
who bore them sons

12 Who resembled their fathers
in strength and fame.
They had the strength to topple hills;
they wielded *śāla*-and-tamāla trees.

13 Their flesh was rock-hard,
they were unbelievably strong;
they were skilled in warfare,
they could summon enormous strength.

14 They had each the power
of a thousand elephants;
they were wind-swift;
some were nomads; others lived in woods.

15 The world-creating Adorable Bhagavān
ordained all this
and instructed Mantharā
on what she should do.

16 She grasped his meaning immediately
and, like a flash of thought,
she acted accordingly,
fomenting quarrels everywhere.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-SEVEN

1 "Venerable Brahmin," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"you have told me
about Rāma's and others' births.
What about his exile?

2 Tell me why the brave sons of Daśaratha,
Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa,
had to go to the forest with the illustrious daughter
of Mithilā's king."

3 Daśaratha from birth (Mārkaṇḍeya said)
was a man of dharma,
who observed the rituals, served elders,
and rejoiced when his sons were born.

4 His sons grew to mahā-radiant manhood,
becoming learned
in the Vedas and their mysteries,
and also proficient in the arts of war.

5 After their period of brahmacarya,
they were married,
and Daśaratha was pleased and happy
with his sons.

6 Rāma, so named
because he was the delight of all,
was his intelligent and favourite
eldest son.

7 The wise rājā,
realising that he had become old,
consulted his faithful ministers
and dharma-devoted *purohitas*,

8 In order to proclaim Rāma
as the prince regent.
All his excellent counsellors thought
the time was right.

9 Rāma had pink eyes and massive arms,
he walked like a musth elephant.
He had a broad chest,
and dark blue, curly hair.

10 He was as brave
as Śakra-Indra on the battlefield,
radiantly handsome, wise as Bṛhaspati,
learned in all dharmas,

11 The loved one of the people,
skilled in all arts and branches of knowledge,
self-disciplined,
pleasing even to enemies,

12 Punisher of the wicked,
protector of those who cherished dharma,
a man of high percipience,
victorious and invincible,

13 The enhancer of the joy
of his mother Kausalyā;
seeing him gave rājā Daśaratha
the greatest pleasure.

14 Mahā-radiant and valiant Daśaratha,
thinking of the various *guṇas* of Rāma,
said to his *purohita*:
"Be blessed,

15 O Brahmin! Today is the auspicious night
of Puṣya's ascendance.
Let the ingredients be collected,
and Rāma be invited."

16 Mantharā heard the rājā say this,
and hurried to Kaikeyī
and said to her,
timing her words perfectly:

17 "O Kaikeyī, the rājā has done
a mahā-terrible thing today!
Unfortunate lady,
a fierce, venomous snake has stung you!

18 How blessed is Kausalyā that her son
is being installed as regent!
How unlucky you
that your son is nowhere!"

19 Hearing this, the slim-waisted beauty Kaikeyī,
lavishly dressed
and glittering with a variety
of ornaments,

20 Arranged to meet her husband
in a secluded place.
Smiling and putting on a show of love,
she laughed and said sweetly:

21 "O rājā, you always keep your promise.
Long ago, you promised me a boon.
Grant me that now,
and honour your word."

22 "I will gladly give you any boon you wish,"
the rājā said.
"Do you wish anyone not deserving death
to be killed?
Do you want anyone who is in prison
to be set free?

23 Is there someone to be made rich,
someone to be pauperised?
Everything in the world is mine,
except what belongs to Brahmins.

24 I am the rājā of rājās,
I protect the four castes.
Fortunate one, tell me what you want
without any delay."

25 She pledged him to his promise, embraced him,
and knowing her power over him,
she said these words
to the lord-of-men Daśaratha:

26 "Order Bharata to be proclaimed regent
with the materials
collected for Rāma's proclamation,
and send Rāghava-Rāma to the forest."

27 This displeasing and fearful request
so stunned the rājā
that he was paralysed with grief,
and unable to speak.

28 Informed that his father had promised a boon,
"Let the rājā's truth prevail,"
saying this, dharmātmā Rāma
went to the forest.

29 May fortune favour you, O rājā !
Rāma was followed
by the noble bowman Lakṣmaṇa
and Rāma's wife Sitā,
who was the princess of Videha
and daughter of Janaka.

30 After Rāma had accepted voluntary exile
in the forest,
rājā Daśaratha's body,
abiding by the dharma of Kāla, died.

31 With Rāma gone and the rājā dead,
Kaikeyī Devī summoned Bharata before her,
and said to him
these words:

32 "Daśaratha is in heaven,
Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in the forest,
and you have this huge kingdom
with all its thorns gone."

33 Dharmātmā Bharata said to her:
'Greedy for wealth,
cruelly you drove your husband to death
and broke up the family.

34 O cursed one of the family!
Smear the disgrace on my head,
and take what you want!"
And then he burst into tears.

35 Explaining his innocence before his subjects,
Bharata went to the forest,
wishing to bring back
his brother Rāma.

36 He escorted Kausalyā, Sumitrā and Kaikeyī
to a chariot in the rear,
and set out sadly,
accompanied by Śatrughna,

37 Vasiṣṭha, Vāmadeva,
thousands of Brahmins,
and by people from cities and provinces,
all wanting Rāma to come back.

38 He came across Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa
on Citrakūṭa hill;
both had bows in their hands,
and were garbed as tapasyā-practising ascetics.

39 Rāma said: "Dear brother, *tāta*, return.
Protect the subjects,
while I keep my father's word."
So Bharata went back,
and ruled from Nandigrāma,
by honouring his brother's sandals.

40 Rāma, disturbed by the influx
of citizens and peasants,
proceeded to a huge forest
near Śarabhaṅga's āshram.

41 Paying his respects to Śarabhaṅga,
he took refuge in the Daṇḍaka forest
along the banks
of the lovely river Godavarī.

42 During his stay there, Rāma became involved
in a conflict with Khara,
living in Janasthāna
on account of Śūrpanakhā.

43 Dharma-dedicated Raghu-descendant Rāma
killed fourteen thousand rākṣasas
in order to protect
the tapasyā of the ascetics.

44 Wise Rāma killed
the mahā-powerful Khara and Dūṣaṇa
and restored peace
to that forest of dharma.

45 The rākṣasas were eliminated,
and Śūrpanakhā,
with her nose and lips sliced off,
rushed to her brother in Laṅkā.

46 Crazed with grief, that rākṣasi,
with marks of congealed blood
on her face,
fell at Rāvaṇa's feet.

47 Seeing her disfigured,
Rāvaṇa lost his temper and,
wild with rage and gnashing his teeth,
rose from his throne.

48 He dismissed his ministers
and asked her in private:
"Gentle sister, who has dared insult me
by harming you?

49 Who is this who wants
a sharp spear in his body?
Who is this man sleeping,
with a fire at his head?

50 Who is this who deliberately tramples
a poisonous snake?
Who wants to thrust his hand
into the mane of a mountain lion?"

51 Even as he said this, sparks spluttered
from his sense-organs
like those emitted from a flaming tree-trunk
at night.

52 His sister informed him
of the great war-skill of Rāma
who had routed the rākṣasas
led by Khara and Dūṣaṇa.

53 Rājā-Rāvaṇa pondered what he should do.
He made arrangements
for the capital's defence, consoled his sister,
and rose in the air,

54 Crossing the mountains Trikūṭa and Kāla
from where
he saw the rolling,
makara-filled mahā-ocean.

55 Ten-faced Daśānana-Rāvaṇa crossed the ocean
and arrived in Gokarṇa,
the spot dear to the mahātmā
trident-wielder Śiva.

56 From there the ten-headed king went
to his previous minister Mārīca
who, afraid of Rāma,
had taken refuge in tapasyā.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-EIGHT

1 Seeing Rāvaṇa approaching (said Mārkaṇḍeya),
Mārīca, though flustered, welcomed him
by offering him pūjā-respect
through gifts of fruits and roots.

2 After Rāvaṇa was seated and relaxed,
the rākṣasa Mārīca sat at his feet,
and humbly said
to the eloquent king:

3 "Your complexion looks changed –
is everything right in the kingdom?
Are your subjects obedient
as before?

4 O lord of the rākṣasas,
what brings you to this place?
Consider your most difficult wish
as already accomplished."

5 Rāvaṇa, who was gripped by anger and anguish,
briefly reported
what Rāma had done,
and what he planned as revenge.

6 Mārīca listened attentively,
and then replied quickly to Rāvaṇa:
"I have knowledge of Rāma's prowess –
do not antagonise him.

7 Who is there that can repulse the arrows
of mahātmā Rāma?
That bull-brave mortal is the reason
I have to practise tapasyā here.

8 Which ill-ātmaned wretch has given you advice
that can lead you
only in to the mouth of ruin?"
Rāvaṇa retorted in anger:

9 "If you dare defy me, you will die."
Mārīca thought and argued to himself:
Better I am killed
by a superior being,

10 *Since death seems unavoidable.*
Let me do as he says.
Mārīca said to Rāvaṇa,
finest of the rākṣasas:

11 "In what way can I serve you?
Even if I am undeserving,
I will do what you say."
Daśagrīva-Rāvaṇa said, "Go and tempt Sītā

12 By becoming a deer with begemmed skin
and jewelled horns.
I am certain that, seeing you,
she will send Rāma after you.

13 When Rāma chases you,
I will have Sitā for myself.
I will arrange to abduct her
in his absence.

14 His wife stolen will be enough
to make the ill-minded Rāma die.
Give me this help."
Mārīca performed his own last rites,

15 And sorrowfully followed Rāvaṇa,
who led the way.
They reached the āshram
of the indefatigable Rāma,

16 And put their plan into action.
Rāvaṇa posed
as a shaven-headed ascetic
carrying a three-pronged staff,

17 And Mārīca changed himself into a deer,
Disguised as a deer,
Mārīca appeared
before the princess of Videha.

18 Impelled by fate, Śītā implored Rāma
to get her the deer.
Rāma, eager to please her,
picked up his bow,

19 And, leaving Lakṣmaṇa to guard her,
gave chase.
Carrying a bow, quiver, and sword,
wearing leather finger-protectors,

20 Rāma chased the deer
as Rudra-Śīva chased the star-deer.
The rākṣasa-deer alternately appeared
and disappeared,

21 Luring Rāma far from the āshram.
Rāghava-Rāma determining the identity of the deer,
correctly supposing him
to be a rākṣasa;

[III:278:22-30]

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22 He fitted an arrow of sure aim
and shot down the deer-form.
Wounded, the deer,
in Rāma's voice,

23 Began to wail piteously,
screaming for Śīta and Lakṣmaṇa.
When the princess of Videha
heard those woeful whimperings

24 She started to run to the source of the sorrow.
Lakṣmaṇa stopped her.
"Gentle one, do not fear!
Who can harm Rāma?

25 Śucismitā, sweet-smiling one,
Rāma will be here in a moment."
Sobbing Śītā heard this,
and looked suspiciously at Lakṣmaṇa.

26 The faithful, chaste Śīta,
moved by weakness common to her sex,
doubted innocent Lakṣmaṇa,
and said harshly:

27 "Fool, I know you lust for me.
But I will never allow you
to touch me –
I will kill myself first!

28 I'll fling myself from a hill,
I'll jump into fire,
rather than forsake Rāma
to live with a scoundrel like you,

29 A tigress in the care of a jackal!"
Lakṣmaṇa listened to Śītā –
Lakṣmaṇa who was devoted utterly
to Rāghava-Rāma,

30 And who possessed the noblest character,
and shut his ears.
Picking up his bow, he started following
Rāma's footprints.

31 Without once glancing at Sītā
whose lips were like the fruit of the *bimba,*
Lakṣmaṇa left.
Rāvaṇa appeared,

32 Pious and gentle outside,
but actually an ash-cloaked fire,
disguised as an ascetic
to abduct the spotless lady.

33 As soon as she saw him,
the daughter of Janaka
offered him a seat and welcomed him
with fruits and roots.

34 The bull-brave rākṣasa
ignored these offerings and,
becoming Rāvaṇa,
tried to reassure Vaidehī-Sītā, saying:

35 "Sītā, I am the rākṣasa-rājā,
my name is Rāvaṇa.
My lovely capital is Laṅkā
on the other side of the mahā-ocean.

36 Come with me, and let your beauty glow
among the people there.
Lovely-thighed lady, give up Rāma,
be my wife."

37 Tapasyā-devoted lovely-thighed Jānakī-Sītā.
shut her ears, and said:
"Never speak such words
to me again!

38 If the star-studded skies should fall,
the earth shatter,
if fire lose heat, I will still be loyal
to Raghu-nandana Rāma.

39 How can a she-elephant,
who has enjoyed the company of a lotus-spotted,
freely-roaming, rutting leader of the herd,
be happy with a hog?

40 How can a woman who has relished
honey-wine and flower-wine
be tempted into drinking
stinking rice-wine?"

41 Her lips quivered with anger
as she said this.
Her hands were trembling
as she entered the āshram.

42 Rāvaṇa intercepted the lovely-thighed lady,
and shouted at her,
threatening her fiercely.
She fainted.

43 He seized her by her hair
and rose into the sky.
The mountain-dwelling vulture Jaṭāyu
saw the lady-of-tapasyā Sītā,
in Rāvaṇa's clutches, sobbing,
"Rāma! Rāma!"

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-NINE

1 The mahā-valiant rājā of vultures, Jaṭāyu,
son of Aruṇa
and brother of Sampāti,
was a friend of Daśaratha.

2 When he saw Sītā, whom he considered
as his daughter-in-law,
in Rāvaṇa's lap, he swooped down
on the rākṣasa lord.

3 The vulture warned: "Release her!
Let he go! Let the princess of Mithilā go!
How dare you touch her
when I am alive, O night-wanderer!

4 If you do not free my daughter-in-law,
your life is forfeit!"
He started violently clawing
at the Indra-among-rākṣasas Rāvaṇa.

5 He lacerated Rāvaṇa with his wings
and sharp talons,
and blood gushed out
like a fast-flowing mountain-stream.

6 Attacked by the vulture,
who was Rāma's well-wisher,
Rāvaṇa unsheathed his sword
and sliced off the creature's wings.

7 Killing the vulture-rājā,
who rose above the clouds as huge as a hill,
Rāvaṇa pulled Sītā in his lap,
and flew away.

8 Wherever the princess of Videha
saw an āshram,
a lake, or a river, she threw down
one of her ornaments.

9 The brilliant-minded lady saw five bull-brave tree-men
on a hill
and discarded a mahā-colourful
scarf-like cloth.

10 Glittering in shades of exquisite yellow,
like lightning flashing among clouds,
the garment fluttered down
near the five tree-men.

11 Rāvaṇa swept through the sky like a bird,
and soon covered a large distance,
and arrived
in his enchanting many-gated city,

12 Which had massive ramparts,
and was constructed by Viśvakarman.
The lord of the rākṣasas, carrying Sītā,
entered Lānkā.

13 This was how Vaidehī-Sītā was abducted.
In the meantime,
Rāmā had killed the mahā-deer and met,
on returning, Lakṣmaṇa.

14 As soon as he saw his brother,
Rāma rebuked him, saying:
"How could you have deserted Vaidehī-Sītā.
in the rākṣasa-infested forest?"

15 Anxiety gripped him when he realised
that he had been tricked
by a deer-disguised rākṣasa –
and here in front of him was Lakṣmaṇa!

16 Still scolding, he ran up to Lakṣmaṇa,
and said, "Lakṣmaṇa, is Sītā safe?
I do not see
the Videha princess."

17 Lakṣmaṇa recounted to Rāma
all that had happened,
especially the unprovoked slur she had cast
on his character.

18 Rāma with a burning heart
proceeded towards the āshram.
He came across the hill-huge vulture,
on the ground, dying.

19 Suspecting he was a rākṣasa,
the descendant of Kakutstha, Rāma,
pulled his bow taut, and, with Lakṣmaṇa,
rushed at him.

20 The powerful vulture said to Rāma
and Lakṣmaṇa:
"May you prosper! I am the vulture-rājā,
a *sakhā*-friend of Dasaratha."

21 They laid aside their auspicious bows
and said:
"Who can this be who mentions the name
of our father?"

22 They saw the vulture with both wings sliced,
and he told them
how he had met death trying
to rescue Sītā from Rāvaṇa.

23 Rāghava-Rāma asked the vulture the way
 Rāvaṇa had taken.
The vulture pointed to it by a nod,
 and died.

24 Rāma guessed that it was the south;
 and the descendant of Kakutstha
performed the last rites
 of his father's loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend.

25 Passing many āshrams,
 littered with *kuśa*-grass seats, leaf covers,
broken water-pots, with no inmates,
 and jackals roaming,

26 The two foe-tormentors, agitated by sorrow
 and anxiety at Vaidehī-Sītā's abduction,
pushed southwards
 from Daṇḍakāraṇya.

27 In the huge Daṇḍaka-forest,
 Rāma and Sumitrā's son Lakṣmaṇa
saw many flocks of deer scampering
 in all directions.

28 They heard a chaotic screaming of animals
 such as one hears
during a forest-fire.
 They saw a gruesome headless body,

29 Cloud-dark, rock-huge,
 shoulders broad as a *śāla*-tree,
massive-armed, mahā-mouth on his stomach,
 huge eyes on his chest –

30 It was a rākṣasa!
 He seized Lakṣmaṇa's hand.
Lakṣmaṇa was briefly stupefied
 and paralysed.

31 Glancing at Rāma,
 the rākṣasa slowly pulled Lakṣmaṇa
towards his belly-mouth.
 Lakṣmaṇa wailed, "Look at me, Rāma –

32 Helpless! Your exile, our father's death,
the loss of the Videha princess,
and this beast
have demoralised me!

33 It seems I shall never again see
Kośala and Vaidehī-Sītā
and your coronation
as the rājā of the earth.

34 How fortunate they who will see your face,
shining like the moon
emerging from clouds,
and bathed in the lustral water
sanctified with *kuśa-grass*,
parched rice and *śamī*-twigs!"

35 Intelligent Lakṣmaṇa continued to lament
in this manner,
till the danger-daring descendant of Kakutstha
said to him:

36 "O tiger-among-men, don't surrender to grief.
I am here –
he can do nothing. Cut off his right hand!
I'll cut the left."

37 Even as he said this, Rāma hacked off
the rākṣasa's left hand
with a sword
as if it were a grain of *tila*-corn.

38 The brave son of Sumitrā,
assured by Rāma's presence,
immediately whipped out his sword
and severed the right hand.

39 Lakṣmaṇa kept chopping
at the rākṣasa's body
till the headless anti-god toppled
lifeless on the ground.

40 Suddenly a celestial shape issued
from the body
and stood in mid-air
like a sun in the sky.

41 Eloquent Rāma asked:
"Tell me, who are you?
How did this happen?
What an incredible happening!"

42 The being said to Rāma, "King,
I am the gandharva Viśvāvasu,
forced to take rākṣasa-birth
by a Brahmin's curse.

43 Sītā has been abducted
by rājā Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā.
Go to Sugrīva, who will give you
every assistance.

44 Near the mountain Ṛṣyamūka
is the sacred lake called Pampā,
a haven of cranes
and *haṁsa*-swans.

45 There, wearing a golden garland,
lives Sugrīva,
brother of Vāli, the rājā of tree-men,
with his four advisers.

46 Go to him, and tell him the cause
of your sorrow.
He is in the same plight as you are,
so he will help you.

47 All I can say is that you will see
Jānakī-Sitā again.
The abode of Rāvaṇa is known
to the rājā of the forest-folk.'

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY

1 Mārkaṇḍeya continued: Rāma, still grief-stricken
at the abduction of Sītā,
went to nearby lake Pampā,
filled with variegated lotuses.

2 In Pampā's lovely forests, fanned
by soft and cool, nectar-laden breezes,
memories of his dear wife
touched Rāma.

3 O Indra-among-rājās!
Struck by Kāma's arrows, thinking of his wife,
he grieved deeply.
Sumitra's son Lakṣmaṇa said to him:

4 "Respector of the respect-worthy,
your weakness suits you as ill
as infirmites in a self-disciplined
old man of good habits.

5 You have received information
about the whereabouts of Rāvaṇa
and the Videha princess.
Free her with intelligence and hard work.

6 Let us go to Sugrīva, the bull-brave tree-lord
who lives on the mountain.
Be cheerful –
I, your disciple and assistant, am near."

7 These and other appropriate words
spoken by Lakṣmaṇa
revived Rāma's natural poise
and restored his confidence.

8 Both the heroic brothers Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa
bathed in Pampā's sacred waters,
honoured their *pitṛs*,
and left.

9 They came to the mountain Ṛṣyamūka,
abundant in roots, fruits and trees;
they saw near the peak
five tree-men.

10 Sugrīva sent his minister,
the intelligent tree-dweller Hanumān,
huge as a mountain,
to welcome Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa.

11 They conversed with him for a while,
and met Sugrīva.
Rāma established friendship
with the rājā of the forest-folk.

12 After Rāma had explained the reason
for his visit,
Sugrīva showed him the scarf-cloth
dropped by the abducted Sītā.

13 Rāma received his token,
and installed Sugrīva,
the lord of leaping tree-dwellers,
as monarch of all the world's forest-folk.

14 The descendant of Kakutstha, Rāma,
vowed to kill Vāli in battle,
and Sugrīva pledged
to rescue Vaidehī-Sītā.

15 With this mutual understanding
they arrived in Kiṣkindhā
fully prepared
to engage Vāli in battle.

16 Reaching Kiṣkindhā,
Sugrīva bellowed a torrential challenge,
which Vāli could not endure;
but his wife Tārā stopped him, saying:

17 "From the way the Vānara-lord is shouting,
it seems to me
that he has received outside help.
Do not face him."

18 Her husband, golden-garlanded eloquent Vāli,
also a Vānara-lord,
said to Tārā whose face was lovely like the moon,
queen of stars:

19 "You can make out the voices of all creatures.
Use your skill
and find out whose help has been received
by my brother."

20 Wise, moon-lovely Tārā pondered
a moment;
then she advised her husband:
"Lord of tree-folk, listen –

21 The mahā-truthful brilliant bowman Rāma,
Daśaratha's son, whose wife Rāvaṇa abducted,
has a mutual defence alliance
with Sugrīva.

22 His brother, the invincible mahā-muscled son
of Sumitrā, Lakṣmaṇa
is at his side
to fulfil Sugrīva's plans.

23 Mainda, Dvivida,
the son of the wind god Hanumān,
the rājā of bears Jambuvan –
these advisers of Sugrīva assist Rāma.

24 All of them are mahātmās
with mahā-strength
and keen intelligence;
backed by Rāma, they will kill you."

25 The lord of the tree-folk
ignored her beneficial advice;
his jealousy made him suspect
she secretly desired Sugrīva.

26 He stopped her abruptly.
Emerging from his cave,
he approached Sugrīva on Mālyavat hill,
and said:

27 "You love life.
I have often defeated you before,
but because you are related to me
I let you escape.
Why are you now so eager to rush
to your death?"

28 Foe-vanquishing Sugrīva,
as if reporting to Rāma,
said to his brother these well-timed,
significant words:

29 “O rājā, you have taken my wife Ramā
and my kingdom –
why not take my life too?
That is why I have come to you.”

30 Speaking in this strain to each other,
Vālī and Sugrīva
attacked each other with *śāla* and palm trees
and massive rocks.

31 They clubbed each other viciously,
till both fell;
they moved with virile swiftness
as they exchanged blows.

32 Scratching with nails and teeth,
blood-besmeared,
they looked like two flaming-red
kiṁśuka flowers.

33 One could not tell who was who,
until Hanumān
placed a garland of flowers
on Sugrīva’s neck.

34 The garland-adorned hero shone.
like the mahā-Malaya mountain
encircled
by a necklace of clouds.

35 Identifying Sugrīva by the garland,
the mahā-bowman Rāma
pulled his excellent bow tight,
aiming at Vāli.

36 The bow twanged
like a fierce mechanical contraption.
The arrow sped straight
and pierced the heart of Vāli.

37 Vāli vomited blood,
the arrow stuck in his chest.
He saw Rāma standing, with Sumitrā’s son,
in front of him.

38 He chastised Kākutstha-Rāma,
and fell down unconscious.
Tārā saw moon-splendid Vāli
sprawled dead on the ground.

39 With Vāli eliminated,
Sugrīva gained control of Kiṣkindhā
and obtained the widowed,
lovely moon-faced Tārā.

40 Shrewd Rāma,
paid homage by Sugrīva,
stayed on Mālyavat's auspicious plateau
for four months.

41 Overpowered by kāma,
Rāvaṇa, in his capital Laṅkā,
ensconced Sītā in a grove
as lovely as Nandana-garden.

42 It was an aśoka grove and it resembled
an āshram of tapasyā-practisers.
Emaciated, thinking of her husband,
wearing ascetic garb,

43 And engaged in tapasyā, and fasting,
the large-eyed lady
passed her days sorrowfully,
subsisting on fruits and roots.

44 To guard her, the rākṣasa-lord
appointed rākṣasa-women
carrying darts, swords, maces,
axes, clubs, and torches.

45 Some had two eyes, some three;
some had eyes
in the middle of their foreheads.
Some had long tongues, others none;
some had three breasts,
some one leg, one eye, three braids.

46 These, and other rākṣasīs with burning eyes
and hair as stiff as a camel's
kept watch on Sītā
day and night.

47 And gruesome *piśāca*-women
with the most horrendous voices
kept screeching at the large-eyed Sītā
such threats as:

48 "Eat her!"
"Bite her!"
"Tear her into small pieces like sesame seeds!"
"She hates our master!"

49 Sītā, lost in her grief
for her husband Rāma,
replied to these threats and insults
with deep sighs.

50 "Noble ladies!
Devour me – and soon!
Without the curly blue-haired lotus-eyed one,
I do not wish to live.

51 Separated from him,
Who is so dear to me,
I will live without food
And waste away
Like a she-snake under a palm tree.

52 I will live with none
Except the descendant of Raghu.
I am determined. This is the truth.
Do what you like."

53 The harsh-voiced rākṣasa-women
went and reported to Rāvaṇa,
the Indra-of-rākṣasas,
what they had heard Sītā say.

54 While they were gone to tell Rāvaṇa,
a dharma-following rākṣasi named Trijaṭā
cousoled Vaidehī-Sītā
with these sweet words:

55 "*Sakhī*-Sītā, let me tell you something.
Have faith in me.
Lovely-hipped lady, do not fear –
listen to my words.

56 There is an old, noble bull-brave rākṣasa
named Avindhya.
He is devoted to Rāma
and he told me this –

57 'Go to Sītā, and reassure her, saying:
Your husband, heroic Rāma,
and brave Lakṣmaṇa,
are safe.

58 *The shining scion of the Raghus*
has made alliance
with the Indra-powerful rājā of tree-folk,
and will rescue you.

59 *Gentle lady, have no fear of Rāvaṇa*
who is cursed by the entire world.
You are protected
by Nalakubara's curse.

60 *This wretched scoundrel earlier raped*
his own daughter-in-law,
Nalakubara's wife Rambhā, and was cursed –
he cannot rape any other woman.

61 *Your intelligent husband,*
accompanied by Sumitrā's son,
and protected by Sugrīva,
will come soon and rescue you.'

62 I had a mahā-malignant dream
in which I saw omens
indicating the doom
of vicious minded Paulastya-Rāvaṇa,

63 Who is a ferocious night-wanderer,
who is inclined to ill-ātmaned wickedness
because he was born wicked.
He terrifies all.

64 Kāla has deprived him of all sense:
he challenges even the gods.
In my dream I had glimpses
of his doom.

65 I saw the ten-headed one dancing
in a chariot pulled by asses.
His head was shaven,
his body oily and filthy.

66 I saw Kumbhakarṇa and others naked
and blood-spattered,
their heads shaven, running frantically
to the south.

67 I saw Vibhīṣaṇa:
he was shaded by a white umbrella,
he had a turban and white garlands
he was atop Śveta hill.

68 I saw his four advisers
wearing white garlands
also on Śveta hill.
These five will escape disaster.

69 The ocean-covered earth will taste
the fury of Rāma's weapons –
your husband will straddle the world
with his fame.

70 I saw Lakṣmaṇa setting the four directions
on fire,
and gulping boiled milk-and-honey rice
on a heap of bones.

71 And I saw you weeping
and splattered with blood,
protected by a tiger,
running in the direction of the south.

72 O Sītā, princess of Videha,
you will be reunited with your Rāghava husband,
whom Lakṣmaṇa follows faithfully,
and you will be happy."

73 The fawn-eyed beauty Sītā
heard the words of Trijaṭā,
and was assured of reunon
with her husband.

74 When the horrendous and cruel
piśāca females returned,
they saw Sītā sitting casually
with Trijaṭā.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-ONE

1 Mārkaṇḍeya continued: Sorrowing for her husband,
depressed, dressed in unwashed clothes,
wearing a single jewel for ornament,
devoted to her husband,

2 Sitting on a stone slab,
surrounded by rākṣasa-females –
Sītā thus was seen by kāma-afflicted Rāvaṇa,
and he approached her.

3 Driven by desire, he, whom gods,
gandharvas, yakṣas,
and Kiṃpurusas could not defeat,
went to the aśoka grove,

4 Exquisitely dressed, strikingly handsome,
wearing jewelled ear-rings,
a garland and a crown,
looking like Spring itself personified.

5 He dressed so meticulously he looked
like the wish-fulfilling *kalpa*-tree,
but he was as fearsome as a banyan
in a cremation ground.

6 The night-wandering rākṣasa
went to the slim-waisted lady,
like the planet Śanaiścara
grimly approaching Rohiṇi.

7 Greeting the lovely-hipped, timid-as-a-doe lady,
Rāvaṇa,
afflicted by the arrow-flower-carrying god of love,
said:

8 “Sītā,
Your favours have gone entirely to your husband.
Slim beauty, –
Favour me now.
Dress a little better.

9 Lovely thighed-lady,
Live under my protection.
Wear glamorous dresses and ornaments,
And be the first among my ladies.

10 I have daughters of gods and gandharvas
In my palace.
I also have daughters
Of Dānava and Daitya anti-gods.

11 Fourteen crores of *piśācas*,
And twice as many fearful man-eating rākṣasas
Carry out my commands,

12 And thrice as many yakṣas.
Only a handful
Are under the orders of my brother,
the lord of wealth.

13 Gentle lady,
Lovely-thighed one,
Gandharvas and apsarās attend on me
In my drinking hall,
As they do on my brother.

14 I am the son of the muni Viśravas.
I am known as the fifth Lokapāla,
The world-guardian.

15 Lovely one,
I have as many kinds of food and drink
As the lord of the gods, Tridaśeśa-Indra.

16 Forget your worries of forest-exile.
Be my wife, O lovely-thighed one,
As Mandodarī is.”

17 Enchanting-faced Vaidehī-Sītā turned away
from Rāvaṇa,
whom she treated as more trival than straw,
and said,

18 Even as inauspicious tears drenched
the lovely-thighed lady's firm, round breasts,
tears that fell incessantly from love
for her noble husband,

19 Whom Vaidehī-Sītā looked upon as a god:
"Lord of the rākṣasas!
I am helpless, so I am forced to listen
to your words –

20 Such painful words,
repeated over and over again!
May you prosper and be happy –
but leave me alone.

21 I am another man's wife,
and I am a *pativratā* devoted to my husband.
You cannot have me, a poor human –
I cannot be your wife.

22 What pleasure can you get by forcing
an unwilling woman?
Your Brahmin father, born of Prajāpati,
was like Brahmā himself.

23 You are a world-guardian,
yet you violate dharma!
You insult your rājā-of-rājās brother,
the friend of Maheśvara-Śīva,

24 The lord of wealth, Maheśvara-Kubera,
Are you not ashamed?"
She began sobbing, her breasts heaved,
she covered her face and neck

25 With her garment and wept loudly.
As the slim-waisted lady sobbed,
her long, well-braided,
shining hair

26 Fell on her shoulders like a black snake.
Rāvaṇa
listened to the bitter reply
of beautiful Sītā,

27 And the ill-minded rākṣasa-lord answered
her rejection of him with these words:
"Sītā, let the *makara*-emblemed god of love
consume me;

28 I will never, O sweet-smiling one,
O Cāruhāsinī-Sītā, O lovely-thighed one,
enjoy you by force.
You are loyal to a mere human –

29 Rāma. So what can I do, though he is
Only a mortal and fit to be my food?"

30 Saying this to the lady
with a faultless figure,
the rākṣasa-lord Rāvaṇa disappeared from the spot
before her very eyes.

31 The princess of Videha, burdened with grief,
continued to live there,
guarded by rākṣasīs
and kindly treated by Trijaṭā.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-TWO

1 One night, while Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa,
served by Sugrīva,
were living on Mālyavat, Rāma looked up
at the lambent sky.

2 From the mountain foe-crushing Rāma saw
the clean, cloudless sky,
the radiant moon, planets, stars,
and constellations;

3 And a cool breeze
filled with fragrance of lilies,
lotuses and other flowers
suddenly made him nostalgic.

4 Poignant thoughts of Sītā imprisoned
in Rāvaṇa's abode
made dharmātmā Rāma tell Lakṣmaṇa
the next morning:

5 "Lakṣmaṇa, go to Kiṣkindhā
and enquire about that paṇḍit
of ingratitude, selfishness, and cheap dharma,
the lord of tree-folk,

6 The family-defaming fool whom I installed
on the throne,
and to whom monkeys, apes and bears
pay homage,

7 For whose sake, O mahā-muscled enhancer
of the glory of the Raghus,
I, with your help, killed Vāli
in Kiṣkindhā's groves.

8 I think that wretched forest-lord
to be the most ungrateful on earth,
Lakṣmaṇa, because the fool
does not even remember me.

9 He must have a small mind indeed
that he does not fulfil
his pledge to me,
who helped him unstintingly.

10 He must be wallowing in kāma-pleasures.
If you find him doing nothing
to get Sītā back, make Vālī's doom his doom.
Everyone dies sooner or later anyway.

11 But if that bull-brave lord of tree-men
is loyal to us,
then bring him here, O descendant of Kakutstha.
And hurry!"

12 Lakṣmaṇa, happy to obey the words
of his elders,
took his beautiful bow and arrows,
and left for Kiṣkindhā.

13 He arrived at the gate of Kiṣkindhā
and entered without any opposition
Rājā Sugrīva thought
Lakṣmaṇa was angry.

14 Humbly, the Vānara-lord offered pūjā-respect
to Lakṣmaṇa;
his wife did the same. Both welcomed him
with joy and courtesy.

15 Lakṣmaṇa, Sumitrā's son,
told him about Rāma's feelings.
Sugrīva heard everything,
did *añjali* before Lakṣmaṇa,

16 As did the Vānara-lord's attendants and his wife
and, speaking
with great humility and with joy,
that Indra-among-rājā said to Lakṣmaṇa:

17 "Lakṣmaṇa, I am neither selfish
nor ungrateful nor cruel.
Let me tell you what I have done
to expedite Sītā's rescue.

18 I have sent skilful tree-men
in all the directions
and ordered them to report to me
within a month.

19 Brave hero, they will scour the entire earth –
all its seas,
forests, mountains, cities, villages,
towns, and mines.

20 There are five nights left
for the month to end.
By that time, you and Rāma will get
the mahā-joyful news."

21 Noble-minded, large-hearted Lakṣmaṇa,
hearing the forest-lord Sugrīva-
speak in this manner, discarded his anger,
and offered him pūjā-respect.

22 He and Sugrīva went to Rāma
who was living on the Mālyavat plateau;
Lakṣmaṇa reported
he had succeeded.

23 Thousands of Indra-powerful forest dwellers returned
after searching the three quarters,
with the exception of those
who went south,

24 And said to Rāma: "We have scoured
the sea-girdled earth,
and found no trace of Rāvaṇa
or the princess of Videha."

25 Rāma was disturbed by this,
but took heart as best he could,
hopeful that the bull-brave Vānaras who went south
would bring good news.

26 Two months passed. One day,
some tree-dwellers rushed to Sugrīva;
and gave him this piece
of information:

27 "Forest-lord, the far-extending grove Madhuvana
which Vāli preserved
and which you guarded, is now being enjoyed
by the son of Pavana, Hanumān,

28 And by Vāli's son Aṅgada,
and other bull-brave tree-dwellers, O rājā,
who were sent by you to search
in the region of the south."

29 Learning of the tree-dwellers' boldness,
Sugrīva surmised that they were successful
for only successful servants
would dare take such liberties.

30 The bull-brave, intelligent lord of the tree-folk
informed Rāma,
and Rāma also concluded that Maithilī-Sītā
had finally been traced.

31 Led by Pavana's son Hanumān,
those tree-dwellers rested,
and then approached Sugrīva
who was with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa.

32 O Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira! From the gestures
and look on Hanumān's face,
Rāma was convinced that Sītā's whereabouts
had been located.

33 The forest dwellers, successfully led
by Hanumān,
respectfully did *praṇāma* before Rāma,
Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva.

34 Rāma, bow and arrows in hand,
asked the group:
"Will you give me a new lease of life?
Have you found her?

35 Will you help me kill my enemy
in battle,
rescue the daughter of Janaka,
and reign peacefully in Ayodhyā?

36 Wifeless and honourless,
I have no desire to live –
until the Videha princess is recovered
and my foes slain."

37 Rāma said this, and the son of the wind-god
Hanumān replied:
"Rāma, I bring good news.
I have seen the daughter of Janaka.

38 We combed the south,
its mountains, forests and mines;
our time was nearly over;
exhausted, we came to a mahā-cave.

39 It was many *yojanas* long;
we entered the cave.
It was dark and mossy and huge,
swarming with insects.

40 After we had walked quite a long distance
in it,
we saw the radiant sun –
and then, a dazzling palace.

41 O Raghava descendant, that palace belonged
to the Daitya anti-god Maya.
In it was a female ascetic Prabhāvatī,
practising tapasyā.

42 She fed us delicious food and drink.
Our strength restored,
we pushed further on the path
indicated by her.

43 Emerging from the cave,
we saw the salt-ocean
and near it, the Sahya, Malaya
and Durdara mahā-mountains.

44 We climbed the Malaya and saw
the abode of Varuṇa:
the huge ocean. Depressed, we gave up
all hope of life.

45 This mahā-ocean was hundreds of *yojanas* wide,
and filled with *timi*-whales,
crocodiles, and fish.
We lost heart.

46 We sat down, determined to fast to death.
While we were discussing plans,
we mentioned
the vulture Jaṭāyu.

47 And suddenly we saw a horrendous,
fear-instilling mountain-huge bird-shape
that looked like
another Vainateya-Garuḍa.

48 Eager to devour us, it approached us
and said:
'Who is it that mentions the name
of my brother Jaṭāyu?

49 I am Sampāti, his elder brother,
and lord of birds.
Once, competing with each other,
we soared toward the sun,

50 And I fell with my wings singed,
but Jaṭāyu escaped.
That was the last I saw of my dear brother,
the vulture-king.

51 My wings burnt, I plummeted down,
and have been lying here since then
on this mahā-mountain.'
We told him of Jaṭāyu's death,

52 And also, briefly, of the sorrow
that has befallen you.
He heard this sad news, and then,
O rājā, Sampāti,

53 Deeply affected, kept asking:
'Tell me, who is Rāma?
How was Sītā abducted?
How was Jaṭāyu killed?

54 I am eager to know all this,
O excellent tree-dweller.'
I informed him of the misfortune
that befell you,

55 And also of our resolve
to starve to death.
And that rājā of birds imspired us
with these words:

56 'I know Rāvaṇa.
His mahā-capital Laṅkā can be seen
on the other side of the ocean
in the Trikūṭa valley.

57 The princess of Videha
is likely to be there.
I am sure of this.'
When he said this, we rose,

58 And held a meeting on how best
to cross the ocean –
but, O foe-crusher, we lacked the courage
to do so.

59 I invoked my father's energy and,
inspired, I leapt
over the mahā-ocean,
which was a thousand *yojanas* wide,
after killing a rākṣasa-female
who lived in the waters.

60 I saw the chaste Sītā
in Rāvaṇa's inner apartments,
longing for a glimpse of her husband,
observing fast and tapasyā.

61 She had uncombed hair, she was dust-covered,
thin and weak, a lady of tapasyā,
Recognising her
by these strange signs,

62 I went to her. She was alone.
I said, 'Sītā,
I am Rāma's messenger, a tree-man,
the wind-god's son.

63 I have leapt across the skies for your darshan
and to give you this message:
The brothers Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa
are well,

64 And attended upon by Sugrīva
and all the tree-folk.
Both Rāma and Sumitrā's son enquire
about your welfare.

65 Their friend, Sugrīva, too enquires
about you.
Your husband will soon come to you,
with an army of tree-men.

66 Devī, trust me – I am a tree-man,
not a rākṣasa.'
She pondered my words,
and then said to me:

67 'From what Avindhya told me,
I guessed you to be Hanumān.
O mahā-muscled one,
Avindhya is an old and respected rākṣasa.

68 He said to me that Sugrīva
had advisers like you.'
Then she asked me to leave,
and gave me this jewel

69 Which had enabled the blameless lady
to endure her misery for so long.
To confirm her identity,
Vaidehī-Sītā said to me

70 That once, when you were living
on the mahā-mountain Citrakūṭa,
you shot a reed-arrow and blinded in on eye
a wicked crow. O tiger-among-men,

71 This she told me only to assure me
there was no mistake.
I allowed myself
to be taken captive,
and returned, after setting Laṅkā ablaze."
Rāma thanked Hanumān.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-THREE

1 Rāma was sitting with them
(Mārkaṇḍeya continued)
where the chiefs of the tree-men, on Sugrīva's order,
began assembling.

2 Surrounded by hundreds of thousands
of crores of forest-folk,
Vāli's father-in-law, shining Suṣeṇa,
came to Rāma.

3 The two Indra-like forest-lords,
mahā-valiant Gaja and Gavaya,
came with a following
of ten crores each.

4 Mahārāja, the fearful-looking Gavākṣa,
who had the tail of a cow,
came with sixty crores
of Vānaras.

5 The massive Vānara called Gandhamādana
    whose dwelling
was on Gandhamādana mountain,
    brought one hundred thousand crores.

6 The shrewd forest-lord Panasa,
    a being
of mahā-enormous strength,
    brought fiftyseven crores of followers.

7 The hugely-valiant and illustrious
    elderly forest-lord
named Dadhimukha brought a mahā-army
    of ferocious tree-dwellers.

8 Jāmbavān came with a hundred
    thousand crores
of dreadful black bears,
    each with a *tilaka* mark.

9 Mahārāja, these and other lords
    of the tree-dwellers
arrived in order
    to assist Rāma.

10 What tumult! What cacophony!
    They scurried about,
growling like lions
    and shaking their hill-huge bodies.

11 Some looked like tall mountain-peaks,
    some like buffaloes,
some like autumn clouds;
    some had bright vermilion faces.

12 As they poured in from all sides,
    some shuffled,
some jumped about, and some flung dust
    at each other.

13 The massive army of forest-dwellers,
    like an ocean overflowing,
took up formation
    at Sugrīva's command.

14 On an auspicious *muhūrta,*
under a fortunate constellation,
all the lords who had come
from different parts

15 Gathered under the leadership
of Śrīmān Rāghava-Rāma and fearful Sugrīva,
and began to march as if to destroy
all the worlds.

16 The wind-god's son Hanumān
marched in front,
and the rear was protected
by Sumitrā's brave son.

17 Wearing lizard-skin finger-protectors,
and surrounded by the chiefs,
the two brothers looked
like the planet-ringed sun and moon.

18 Brandishing *śāla* and *tāla* trees and rocks
instead of arrows,
the huge army looked like a vast cornfield
at sunrise.

19 Guarded by Nala, Nīla, Aṅgada,
Krātha and Mainda,
they marched inexorably to achieve
Rāghava-Rāma's objective.

20 Through valleys abundant in fruits,
roots, and water,
with plentiful honey and meat,
the vast army

21 Moved unopposed and temporarily camped,
until it came
to its final destination,
the vast salt ocean.

22 An army vast like an ocean
beside the salt ocean!
Innumerable banners fluttered
when the army camped there.

23 The famed son of Daśaratha, Śrīmān Rāma
said these appropriate words to Sugrīva,
who was surrounded
by all his Vānara-chiefs:

24 "We have a vast army –
and the ocean is difficult to cross.
What have you planned for a situation
like this?"

25 Many of the tree-men,
brimming with over-confidence,
said, "We have a means."
As if words were enough!

26 Some planned to take boats,
others suggested rafts.
But Rāma told them gently,
"No, this will not do.

27 Brave ones, the entire army
can never cross
a thousand-*yojana*-wide ocean.
Your plan is not practical.

28 We simply do not have that many boats.
And we must not let
the interests of sea-trade suffer
because of us.

29 We have a huge army. One mistake,
and we will be destroyed by our foes.
Rafts and boats
are not the answer.

30 But I will offer homage
to the lord of waters,
I will fast on this shore.
He will show me a way.

31 If he refuses to show me how,
I will dry up the ocean
with my unquenchable
fiery mahā-weapons."

32 Saying this, Rāghava-Rāma and Sumitrā's son
touched water
in token of purification and,
spreading *kuśa*-mats
beside the ocean,
reclined upon them.

33 The lord-of-strcams-and-rivers, the resplendent Ocean,
surrounded by water-creatures,
appeared to Rāma
in a dream.

34 Addressing him pleasingly as
"O son of Kausalya",
the Ocean, treasury of hundreds of gems,
said to Rāma:

35 "O bull-brave mortal!
Tell me what help you need from me.
I am of Ikṣvāku's race
and therefore your relative." Rāma said:

36 "Lord of all streams and rivers!
Show a way for my army to march across
so that I may kill
the ten-headed scoundrel Paulastya-Rāvaṇa,

37 If you do not allow my army passage,
I will dry you up
with mantra-inspired
celestial missiles."

38 The Varuṇālaya-Ocean was deeply distressed
by Rāma's words.
Varuṇa did *añjali* before Rāma,
and replied:

39 "I do not want to obstruct you.
I am not your ill-wisher.
Rāma, listen to my words,
and do as you please.

40 If I give in to you
and allow your soldiers passage,
others, equally skilled in bow-craft,
will want the same benefit.

41 You have a powerful forest-lord
named Nala,
an excellent mechanic,
the son of the world-artficer Viśvakarman.

42 Whatever he casts on my waters –
wood, straw, stone –
I will support it.
That can serve as a bridge for you."

43 Saying this, the Ocean vanished.
Rāma rose and said to Nala:
"Build a bridge over the ocean.
You are the best person for this."

44 Rāma had a bridge constructed
that was ten *yojanas* wide
and a hundred *yojanas* long
over the ocean.

45 Even to this day it exists,
known as "Nala's Bridge".
The Ocean accepted that great bridge
over its body.

46 Dharmātmā Vibhīṣaṇa,
the youngest brother of Rāvaṇa,
accompanied by four advisers,
came to Rāma.

47 Mahā-minded Rāma welcomed him
with royal courtesy.
Sugrīva, however, suspected
that he might have come to spy.

48 Rāghava-Rāma noticed the obvious sincerity
of his good conduct and his actions
and, completely satisfied,
offered him pūjā-respect.

49 He made Vibhīṣaṇa sovereign
of all the rākṣasas
and elected him as his adviser
and Lakṣmaṇa's associate.

50 O Lord of men, following Vibhīṣaṇa's instructions,
Rāma, within a month,
crossed with his army
over the bridge on the mahā-ocean.

51 Reaching Laṅkā,
he ordered his tree-dwellers
to loot and pillage
the lovely gardens in Laṅkā's outskirts.

52 Vibhīṣaṇa arrested two ministers of Rāvaṇa –
Śuka and Sāraṇa –
who had come as spies,
in tree-dwellers' disguise.

53 When those two night-wanderers showed
their real rākṣasa-forms,
Rāma paraded them before his troops,
and released them.

53 Leaving his army in the pleasure-groves
of Laṅkā,
Rāma despatched the wise Vānara Aṅgada
as his messenger to Rāvaṇa.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-FOUR

1 The descendant of Kakutstha
camped his soldiers
in those fruit-and-root-abundant groves,
and cared for them properly.

2 Perfectionist Rāvaṇa set about
making unassailable Laṅkā
fully impregnable by ordering *cakras*
of war-śāstra specifications.

3 The seven moats that protected
the city's four gates,
swarming with fish and crocodiles
in their deep waters,
were strengthened by sharp *khadira* stakes
driven in the ground.

4 The ramparts were defended by catapults
that hurled oval stones and iron rods;
the sentries carried earth-pots
with snakes and lubricants;

5 The soldiers guarding the ramparts
had maces, fire-brands,
arrows, lances, swords, axes, fire-missiles
and wax cudgels.

6 The city gates were defended
by fixed and mobile detachments
of countless infantry, cavalry,
and elephants.

7 Aṅgada arrived at one of the gates,
was announced
to the Indra-of-rākṣasas Rāvaṇa,
and he bravely entered.

8 Among those crores of Laṅkā's rākṣasas,
Aṅgada shone
like the sun dazzling
through masses and masses of clouds.

9 The eloquent forest-lord Aṅgada approached
Paulastya-Rāvaṇa,
who was sitting with his ministers,
and gave him Rāma's message.

10 "O rājā, the mahā-famed ruler of Kosala,
Raghu's descendant,
requests me to convey this message to you.
Heed it, O sire!

11 Those countries whose rājās are licentious
and unjust and indisciplined
lay themselves open
to fearful ruin.

12 You are guilty of abducting Sītā –
the fault is yours.
As a result, thousands of innocent people
will perish.

13 Puffed with power and pride,
you have killed many ṛṣis
living peacefully in the forests,
insulted the gods,

14 Butchered rāja-ṛṣis,
ravished helpless weeping women –
you must now reap the fruits
of your misdeeds.

15 I will kill you and your advisers.
Be manly – fight!
Night-wanderer, I may be a mortal –
but beware my bowcraft!

16 Free Sītā, daughter of Janaka.
If you stubbornly refuse to free her,
my sharp arrows will rid the earth
of all rākṣasas!"

17 Rājā Rāvaṇa heard this harsh ultimatum
of the messenger,
and could not control himself,
so fierce was his age.

18 Four night-wandering rākṣasas,
taking cues from their master,
gripped Aṅgada's four limbs
like birds swooping on a tiger.

19 Aṅgada leapt up to the roof
of the palace,
lifting with him those four limb-gripping
wanderers-of-the-night.

20 The night-rangers fell with a loud crash
on the ground;
their ribs were smashed, and they lay there,
severely wounded.

21 With another mighty leap
from the roof of the palace,
he cleared the walls of Laṅkā,
and landed in his camp.

22 The forest-lord informed Indra-of-the Kosalas
Rāma of what had happened.
Rāghava-Rāma praised him highly,
and the energetic Vānara Aṅgada rested.

23 Descendant-of-Raghu Rāma ordered
a concerted attack
by the wind-swift tree-men
which breached Laṅkā.

24 Lakṣmaṇa, attacking, with Vibhīṣaṇa
and the bear lord Jāmbavān,
demolished the near impregnable
southern gate.

25 Rāma led a full-scale assault
with one hundred crores
of war-experienced tree-men,
raddish-skinned like young camels.

26 Three crores of long-armed and long-thighed,
grey-furred bears,
with huge paws, squatted,
ready to plunge into battle.

27 The Vānara forest-dwellers,
leaping up and down and sideways,
kicked up so much dust
that the sun was blotted out.

28 The walls, swarming with tree-men
with skins the colour of ears of paddy,
śirīṣa-flowers, the new-born sun,
creamy like flax,

29 Seemed to put on a reddish hue.
O rājā! All the rākṣasas
and their wives and elders were awed
by this spectacle.

30 The invaders smashed the gem-encrusted
pillars, terraces, and place-spires;
they pulverised machines
and their propellers;

31 They seized the fire-missiles, *cakras*,
clubs and stones,
and hurled them fiercely into Laṅkā,
with mahā-screaming and shouting.

32 The night-wanderers guarding the walls
fled in hundreds
when the forest-dwellers
launched their offensive.

33 Ordered by their rājā,
hundreds of thousands
of weird-shaped, any-form-assuming rākṣasas
plunged into action.

34 They released showers of arrows;
with consummate skill,
they scaled the walls
and repulsed the forest-dwellers.

35 Those horrendous wanderers-of-the-night,
looking like so many
shapeless lumps of flesh,
cleared the walls of all Vānaras.

36 Many bull-brave Vānaras tumbled,
their bodies pierced by spears;
many night-wanderers lay crushed
under massive pillars.

37 The battle continued between
the man-eating rākṣasas
and the forest-dwellers,
both heroic parties dragging each other
by the hair or biting and scratching
with teeth and nails.

38 The rākṣasas and the Vānaras
yelled and roared
and butchered and pummelled each other,
but neither would surrender.

39 Rāma released a torrent of arrows
as thick as clouds.
The arrows whistled into Laṅkā,
killing many night-wanderers.

40 The untiring, mighty bowman,
Sumitrā's son Lakṣmaṇa
called out the names of individual rākṣasas
and killed them with *nārāca*-arrows.

41 On Rāghava-Rāma's orders,
the armies withdrew after successfully
breaching the defences of Laṅkā
and making it vulnerable.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-FIVE

1 Mārkaṇḍeya continued: When the Vānara soldiers
had retired to their quarters,
many of the lesser rākṣasa
and *piśāca* followers of Rāvaṇa,

2 Including Parvaṇa, Patana, Jambha,
Khara, Krodhavaśa,
Hari, Praruja, Aruja and Praghasa,
slipped in their midst.

3 They took advantage of their invisibility,
the ill-ātmaned creatures,
but Vibhīṣaṇa frustrated
their power of invisibility.

4 Stripped of their invisibility, O rājā,
they were pounced upon
by the mighty, long-leaping tree-men,
and beaten to death.

5 Unable to tolerate this,
Rāvaṇa led his army of rākṣasas
and *piśācas* out of Laṅkā –
a fearsome formation.

6 He was as skilled in war-craft
as Uśanas-Śukra and,
using Śukra's strategy,
he encircled the forest-dwellers.

7 Rāma, descendant of Raghu,
seeing the ten-headed leader advancing,
manoeuvred his ranks
in the Bṛhaspati-formation.

8 Rāvaṇa began to attack Rāma
without any delay.
Lakṣmaṇa was left to fight
with Indrajit,

9 Sugrīva with Virūpākṣa,
Nikharvaṭa with Tāra,
Nala with Tuṇḍa,
Paṭusa with Panasa.

10 On the battlefield, depending solely
on individual war-skill,
any soldier could select a rival
to duel with.

11 That coward-scaring battle,
that horripilating war,
was as hair-raising as the one
between gods and anti-gods.

12 Rāvaṇa subjected Rāghava-Rāma
to a deluge
of darts, lances and swords,
and Rāma replied with sharp iron darts.

13 Lakṣmaṇa harassed hard-fighting Indrajit,
and Indrajit harassed Lakṣmaṇa,
with darts
that shredded the flesh.

14 Vibhīṣaṇa let loose on Prahasta,
Prahasta on Vibhīṣaṇa,
a stream of sharp arrows
decorated with bird-plumes.

15 The battle that ensued
between those powerful soldiers
shook the moving and unmoving life
of the three worlds.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-SIX

1 Cruel-in-battle Prahasta suddenly rushed
at Vibhīṣaṇa,
and, with a horrendous yell,
smashed him with his mace.

2 Intelligent mahā-muscled Vibhīṣaṇa
took the violent impact of the blow
without reeling,
and stood firm as Himavant mountain.

3 Vibhīṣaṇa picked up a long,
sharp mahā-javelin
welded with a hundred bells and,
chanting mantras, hurled it at Prahasta.

4 It sped like a thunderbolt
and severed the head of Prahasta,
who toppled
like a storm-shattered tree.

5 Noticing the night-wandering Prahasta
killed in battle,
Dhūmrākṣa led a massive charge
against the forest-dwelless.

6 The bull-brave Vānaras,
terrified by horrible-looking soldiers
swooping at them like clouds,
fled the field of battle.

7 Seeing the bull-brave Vānaras
scattering and fleeing without warning,
the wind-god's son, tree-man Hanumān
tried to rally them.

8 When they saw Hanumān,
the son of the wind-god Pavana,
O rājā, standing firm,
they quickly recovered and re-grouped.

9 There was a fierce horripilating
mahā-tumult suddenly,
as the soldiers of Rāma and Rāvaṇa
charged and clashed.

10 The furious battle continued without any respite;
blood muddied the ground.
Dhūmrākṣa released
a volley of arrows.

11 Pavana's son Hanumān the foe-crusher
seized an opportunity
to intercept the steadily advancing rākṣasa
Dhūmrākṣa.

12 Each intent on killing the other,
there took place
between the rākṣasa and the tree-man,
as ghastly a battle
as the one fought
between Indra and Prahlāda.

13 The rākṣasa hit the tree-man
with clubs and lances,
and the tree-man retaliated
with branches and tree-trunks.

14 The enraged son of Māruta, Hanumān,
wildly furious,
annihilated Dhūmrākṣa, his horses,
chariot, and charioteer.

15 Seeing the superlative rākṣasa Dhūmrākṣa
fall in battle,
the tree-men cast off their fear
and killed many rākṣasas.

16 Decimated by the powerful,
victorious forest-dwellers,
the rākṣasas were so demoralised
that they fled to Laṅkā.

17 The remaining night-wanderers
escaped from the carnage,
went to the capital and informed Rāvaṇa
of the massacre.

18 Learning from them that the bull-brave Vānaras
had killed brilliant-in-bowcraft Prahastā,
Dhūmrākṣa, and their combined forces,
Rāvaṇa

19 Sighed deeply
and rose from his glittering throne.
"It is time for Kumbhakarṇa
to move into action," he said.

20 He had all kinds
of mahā-noise-making instruments played
in order to rouse Kumbhakarṇa
from his prolonged somnolence.

21 After Kumbhakarṇa,
woken from his profound stupor
by mahā-effort, had come to his senses,
the fearful rākṣasa-lord,

22 Ten-headed Daśagrīva-Rāvaṇa
said to mahā-powerful Kumbhakarṇa:
"Kumbhakarṇa, you are happy
to be snoring

23 In the middle of our mahā-calamity.
Rāma and his hordes of tree-men
have bridged the sea
and crossed it,

24 And are conducting a merciless war
against us.
I ran off with his wife Sītā,
Janaka's daughter,

25 And he has bridged the mahā-ocean
and attacked us
in order to rescue her.
He has killed Prahasta and others.

26 O scourge of your foes!
No one can stop him but you!
O bravest of the brave!
Put on your armour, and march against him.

27 O foe-crusher! Kill in battle
all your enemies, including Rāma.
Dūṣaṇa's younger brothers,
Vajravega and Pramāthin,

28 Will accompany you with a mahā-army."
Addressing Kumbhakarṇa,
Rāvaṇa also instructed
Vajravega and Pramāthin.

29 The heroic younger brothers said
to Daśānana-Rāvaṇa "So be it."
They marched out of the city,
led by Kumbhakarṇa

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-SEVEN

1 Emerging from the capital
with his warrior-hordes,
Kumbhakarṇa saw the forest-dwellers
in front of him.

2 He looked at them, trying to single out Rāma;
he saw Saumitra-Lakṣmaṇa
standing bow in hand,
prepared for battle.

3 The tree-men manoeuvred around him
till he was surrounded;
then they began clubbing him
with huge tree-trunks.

4 Some, the more fearless ones,
even scratched him,
while others adopted
various other ways of fighting.

5 They harassed the Indra-among-rākṣasas
with numerous terrible weapons;
he only laughed,
and began globbling up the Vānaras

6 Named Bala, Caṇḍabala, and Vajrabāhu,
Seeing that heinous deed
of the rākṣasa
named Kumbhakarṇa,

7 Tāra and others were alarmed
and began shouting.
Hearing the outcry
of the leaders of the forest-dwellers,

8 Sugrīva charged bravely
at mighty Kumbhakarṇa.
The mahā-minded Vānara-lord Sugrīva,
attacking Kumbhakarṇa,

9 Struck him terrifically on the head
with a *śāla*-tree.
Though mahātmā Sugrīva,
with mahā-energy,

10 Smashed the *śāla* on Kumbhakarṇa's skull,
Kumbhakarṇa was not overly affected.
Under the impact of the *śāla*,
Kumbhakarṇa

11 Roused himself and, yelling loudly,
stretched his arms, and seized Sugrīva.
Seeing Sugrīva
in the rākṣasa Kumbhakarṇa's clutches,

12 Heroic, friend-delighting Lakṣmaṇa,
son of Sumitrā,
with mahā-speed fired
a gold-feathered mahā-arrow

13 To kill Kumbhakarṇa.
That arrow of hero-annihilating Lakṣmaṇa
penetrated the armour and body
of Kumbhakarṇa

14 And, crimson with blood,
stuck deep in the earth.
His chest pierced, Kumbhakarṇa released
the forest-lord Sugrīva.

15 With a tremendous roar,
bow-expert Kumbhakarṇa shouted, "Wait! Wait!"
He lifted an enormous boulder and,
raising it high,
he rushed straight
at Saumitra-Lakṣmaṇa.

16 Lakṣmaṇa saw him advancing,
and sliced off his arms
with two razor-arrows.
Kumbhakarṇa grew four new arms.

17 But Sumitrā's son,
with brilliant archery skill,
again used razor-arrows to slice off
those stone-hurling arms.

18 Kumbhakarṇa's head and arms multiplied,
his body became grotesque.
Lakṣmaṇa felled hill-huge Kumbhakarṇa
with his Brāhma-missile.

19 Mahā-valiant Kumbhakarṇa toppled,
struck by the celestial weapon
like a huge many-branching tree
sliced by lightning.

20 Seeing the powerful Kumbhakarṇa,
strong as Vṛtra himself,
fall dead, the rākṣasas were terrified,
and they fled.

21 Seeing them dispersing in panic,
Dūṣaṇa's two brothers
launched a desperate attack on Lakṣmaṇa
in order to rally them.

22 When Saumitra-Lakṣmaṇa saw
Vajravega and Pramāthin
advancing upon him, he shouted
and discharged arrows at them.

23 A horrifyingly-gruesome encounter resulted,
a horripilating duel,
between Dūṣaṇa's younger brothers
and Lakṣmaṇa.

24 Lakṣmaṇa drowned them with arrows,
and the two heroes angrily retaliated
with a counter-shower
of arrows.

25 That fearful battle between mahā-muscled Lakṣmaṇa
and Vajravega and Pramāthin
lasted only
for a brief while.

26 Māruta's son Hanumān lifted up
a hill-peak
and threw it at the rākṣasa Vajravega,
killing him.

27 Mahā-powerful Nila attacked Pramāthin,
Dūṣaṇa's younger brother,
and reduced him to pulp by throwing
a huge rock at him.

28 Once again there ensued a horrific carnage
between the armies
of Rāma and Rāvaṇa,
both fighting bravely.

29 The Vānaras killed hundreds of rākṣasas,
the rākṣasas hundreds of tree-men,
but the Vānaras
killed more than they.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-EIGHT

1 Learning that the mahā-bowman Prahasta,
the mighty Dhūmrākṣa
and Kumbhakarṇa and their followers
had been killed in battle,

2 Rāvaṇa said to his brave son Indrajit,
"Foe-crusher, kill Rāma –
and do not spare Sugrīva
and Lakṣmaṇa

3 My good son, by defeating Indra,
the thousand eyed,
thunder-wielding husband of Śacī,
you have brought me refulgent glory.

4 Be visible or invisible, but,
O most excellent foe-crushing weapons-wielder,
destroy my enemies with your granted-as-boons
celestial missiles.

5 Faultless one,
Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva wall fall
before the onslaught of your weapons,
as will their followers.

6 Faultless, mahā-armed one,
end with a victory the war
that Prahasta and Kumbhakarṇa
could not win.

7 Wipe out my enemies today, my son,
and all their followers,
and add to my joy as you did
when you routed Vāsava-Indra."

8 O rājā! Indrajit said, "I will do it."
He put on his armour,
climbed into his chariot,
and drove to the battlefield.

9 The bull-brave rākṣasa Indrajit
proclaimed his name,
and challenged auspiciously-marked Lakṣmaṇa
to open combat.

10 Like a lion attacking a deer,
Lakṣmaṇa strode out
with bow and arrows,
instilling fear by slapping his arms.

11 A mahā-terrifying confrontation and clash
took place between these victory-desiring two,
each defiant, each skilled in arms,
and using divine missiles.

12 When the bravest of the brave,
the son of Rāvaṇa
failed to defeat Lakṣmaṇa in bowcraft,
he tried other means.

13 He hurled *tomara*-javelins at Lakṣmaṇa
with incalculable violence.
Sumitra's son disintegrated them
with his sharp arrows.

14 They splintered, and fell on the ground.
Illustrious Śrīmān Aṅgada,
son of Vāli, stepped forward,
uprooted a giant tree,

15 And rushing in
with a mahā-burst of speed,
smashed it on Indrajit's head.
Undeterred, Indrajit picked up a *prāsa*-lance,

16 Intending to hurl it at Aṅgada.
Lakṣmaṇa disintegrated that lance too.
Rāvaṇa's son Indrajit,
seeing Angada near him,

17 Picked up a mace
and hit Aṅgada's left rib.
Ignoring the terrible blow,
the bull-brave Vānara son of Vāli,

18 Aṅgada, flung a śāla-trunk at Indrajit.
Furiously hurled by Aṅgada
to kill Indrajit,
that massive tree

19 Samshed his chariot, charioteer, and horses.
Seeing
his horses and charioteer killed,
Indrajit jumped off,

20 O rājā, and took recourse to his powers
of manifold māyā –
Rāvaṇa's son seemed to vanish!
Realising that the rākṣasa had dematerialised,

21 Rāma took special precautions
to protect his army.
Indrajit, shooting boon-received arrows
at Rāma

22 And mahā-powerful Lakṣmaṇa,
succeeded in wounding them in several places.
Though Rāvaṇa's son remained invisible,
using māyā,

23 Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa harassed him
with a barrage of arrows.
Aiming at those lion-like heroes,
Indrajit

24 Also released hundreds of thousands
of arrows.
Noticing that Indrajit's invisibility
made his arrow-swarms effective,

25 The forest-dwellers, with massive stones,
flew up, trying to spot him.
But he remained undetected,
and harassed the two brothers.

26 With the magic of māyā,
Rāvaṇi-Indrajit had advantage over them.
Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa,
riddled with arrows,
fell on the ground, like the sun and moon
dropping from the sky.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-NINE

1 Seeing the two brothers Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa
fall,
Rāvaṇa's son fired a net of arrows
to immobilise them.

2 Trapped in those arrows,
those heroic tigers-among-men
on the field of battle
looked like helpless birds in a cage.

3 Seeing them prostrate on the ground,
wounded by hundreds of arrows,
Sugrīva and other tree-folk
surrounded them,

4 Including Suṣeṇa, Mainda, Dvivida,
Kumuda, Aṅgada,
Hanumān, Nīla, Tāra, Nāla,
and many forest-leaders.

5 Efficient Vibhīṣaṇa came there
and, by means of the Prajña-weapon
restored them
to consciousness.

6 And Sugrīva plucked out the arrows
from their bodies.
Use of the wonder-drug Viśalya
along with celestial mantras

7 Made the two heroes recover.
After their arrows were extracted,
the mahā-chariot-heroes sat up,
free from pain and weakness.

8 Seeing Rāma, descendant of Īkṣvāku,
completely recovered,
Vibhīṣaṇa did *añjali*, O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
and said to him:

9 "Foe-chastiser, at the order
of the rājā-of-rājās Kubera,
a Guhyaka has brought this water
from Śveta hill.

10 Foe-crusher, mahārāja Kubera
has sent his water
so that you may be able to see
invisible creatures.

11 If you wash your eyes with this water,
you and anyone to whom you give it,
will be able to see
invisible creatures."

12 "Very well," said Rāma
and, taking the water
washed and purified his eyes with it.
Mahā-minded Lakṣmaṇa,

13 Sugrīva, Jāmbavān, Hanumān, Aṅgada,
Mainda, Dvivida,
Nīla and the majority of the forest-leaders
did the same.

14 What Vibhīṣaṇa had predicted, happened.
Yudhiṣṭhira (continued Mārkaṇḍeya),
in a moment they gained
super-normal vision.

15 Meanwhile,
Indrajit hurried to his father
and informed him of his success;
then returned to the battlefield.

16 As Indrajit, eager to do fresh battle,
advanced,
Sumitrā's son, on Vibhīṣaṇa's advice,
intercepted him.

17 Bent on killing success-flushed Indrajit,
who had not yet performed
his daily sacred rituals,
Lakṣmaṇa shot arrows at him.

18 Between those heroes
intent on mutual destruction,
a marvellous duel ensued, resembling
the Śakra-Indra-Prahlāda clash.

19 Indrajit wounded Sumitrā's son
with flesh-shredding arrows;
Saumitrā-Lakṣmaṇa wounded Rāvaṇi-Indrajit
with fire-tipped arrows.

20 Hemmed in by Lakṣmaṇa's arrow-swarm,
rage-demented Rāvaṇi-Indrajit
released eight arrows
that were like venomous snakes.

21 Listen carefully while I describe
how Lakṣmaṇa, the heroic son of Sumitrā,
killed Indrajit
with three fire-energised arrows.

22 One arrow sliced off the arm
that held the bow;
the second severed the arm
that fitted the arrows;

23 And the third sharp and glittering arrow
cut off the head
with its striking nose
and glowing ear-rings.

24 A grisly sight – that decapitated,
armless body!
After killing the strongest hero,
Lakṣmaṇa killed Indrajit's charioteer.

25 The horses galloped off towards Laṅkā.
Rāvaṇa saw
that his son was not
in the chariot.

26 He inferred his son had been killed.
Torn between fear, grief, and pain,
he actually thought
of killing Vaidehī-Sītā .

27 Brandishing his sword,
the ill-minded ten-headed king
rushed to the aśoka grove
where Sītā was pining for Rāma.

28 Let me tell you now how Avindhya,
seeing Rāvaṇa rush in hot-headedly,
cooled Rāvaṇa's criminal intent
with these words:

29 "You rule a vast and famous land,
you must not harm a woman.
She is your captive –
she is as if dead.

30 What can you do now
except destroy her body?
It you really want to kill her,
kill her husband.

31 Even hundred-sacrifices-lord Śatakratu-Indra
is no match for you.
You have often terrified him and the gods
in battle."

32 With these, and more arguments
of the same kind,
Avindhya pacified Rāvaṇa,
who accepted the advice.

33 Deciding to do battle,
the night wanderer sheathed his sword,
and ordered his chariot
to be readied.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINETY

1 Mārkaṇḍeya continued:
Enraged at the death of his dear son,
ten-necked Rāvaṇa
climbed into his gem-and-gold-studded chariot,
and drove off.

2 He was assisted by fear-instilling rākṣasas
brandishing various weapons.
He charged at Rāma
and the forest-lords.

3 As he charged recklessly,
Mainda, Nāla, Nīla,
Aṅgada, Hanumān and Jāmbavān
encircled his forces,

4 And, in the very presence
of the ten-necked king,
the bull-brave bears and Vānaras
pounced on his army with tree-trunks.

5 Watching his troops getting decimated,
rākṣasa-ruling Rāvaṇa
decided to use the māyā
for which he was renowned.

6 Hundreds of thousands of rākṣasas,
armed with spears, arrows,
and two-headed swords,
seemed to sprout from his body.

7 Rāma annihilated them all
with his celestial missiles.
So Rāvaṇa resorted to a fresh batch
of māyā-manoeuvres.

8 O Bharata-Yudhiṣṭhira! Creating several rākṣasas
exactly resembling Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa,
Daśānana-Rāvaṇa
furiously attacked the brothers.

9 And the rākṣasas, night-wanderers
hostile to Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa,
with bows in hand
rushed at Rāma.

10 The unperturbed son of Sumitrā,
the dynasty-delighting descendant of Ikṣvāku,
ignored the māyā of the Indra-of-rākṣasas,
and shouted to Rāma:

11 "Kill all the wicked-atmaned rākṣasas
who come in your shape!"
Rāma annihilated them all,
including many wicked-ātmaned others.

12 Mātali, charioteer of Śakra-Indra,
drove up to Rāma
in a chariot of sun-radiant glory,
pulled by bay horses.

13 "Descendant of Kakutstha," said Mātali,
"finest of men,
these bay horses belong to Śakra-Indra,
slayer of Daitya and Dānava anti-gods,

14 And pull his magnificent chariot.
O tiger-among-men, ride in this chariot
which I will expertly drive.
O tiger-like-hero,

15 Kill Rāvaṇa on the battlefield.
Hurry!"
Rāma, addressed by Mātali,
suspected this to be another

16 Māyā-trick. But Vibhīṣaṇa said to him,
"O tiger-among-men,
this is not a māyā-magic
of wicked-ātmaned Rāvaṇa.

17 O mahā-radiant lord,
climb into this chariot of Indra."
The descendant of Kakutstha cheerfully replied,
"I will do so."

18 Ascending the chariot,
he drove straight at Rāvaṇa.
Rāma's attack on Rāvaṇa
elicted shouts of "Hai! Hai!"

19 The gods in heaven roared like lions
and beat on large drums.
A fierce duel ensued
between Rāma and ten-shouldered Rāvaṇa.

20 That fight had no parallel.
At first,
the rākṣasa night-wanderer flung
a mahā horrific-looking javelin,

21 Resembling Indra's thunderbolt
and Brahmā's rod of punishment,
at Rāma, which Rāma parried
with very sharp arrows.

22 Seeing his javelin repulsed,
ten-headed Rāvaṇa was dismayed.
Recovering quickly, he angrily released
a shower of sharp arrows.

23 Tens of thousands of maces and spears
and *bhusuṇḍis* and battle-axes
began to fall
all around Rāma –

24 Including all kinds of darts, *śataghni*-fire-missiles,
and razor-sharp arrows.
Seeing the multiple māyā
created by ten-necked Daśagriva-Rāvaṇa

25 The Vānaras were alarmed
and fled in fear.
Selecting a superlative
feather adorned golden arrow,

26 The descendant of Kakutstha,
Rāma fitted it
to his Brāhma-missile.
He chanted a Brāhma-mantra,

27 Even as the gods and gandharvas
led by Śakra-Indra
watched with amazement.
Seeing the Brāhma-weapon fitted,
only a little of their rākṣasa-foe's life
was now left,

28 Thought the gods, Dānava anti-gods, and Kinnaras.
Rāma took aim,
and fired that incredibly swift
Brāhmā-arrow-missile –

29 An incomparable weapon,
fierce like Brahmā's rod of power,
fated to kill Rāvaṇa.
As soon Rāma fired it, O Bharata-Yudhiṣṭhira

30 The greatest of the rākṣasas,
with his chariot, his charioteer and horses,
exploded
in a mahā-burst of flame.

31 The gods, gandharvas and Cāraṇas,
seeing Rāvaṇa obliterated
by indefatigable Rāma,
were exultant.

32 The five elements deserted
mahā-fortunate Rāvaṇa.
The energy of the Brāhma-weapon deprived him
of his universal power.

33 The missile disintegrated the atoms of his body,
his flesh and blood
with such force
that not even ashes remained.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINETY-ONE

1 After exterminating the wicked Indra-of-rākṣasas
Rāvaṇa, the enemy of the gods,
Rāma and Sumitrā's son Lakṣmaṇa
celebrated victory.

2 With ten-necked Daśagrīva Rāvaṇa killed,
the gods, led by ṛṣis,
sang the praises of mahā-armed Rāma,
"Victory to you!"

3 The gods, gandharvas
and other inhabitants of heaven
pleased lotus-eyed Rāma with flower-showers
and praise-offerings.

4 After this pūjā of Rāma,
they returned to their abodes.
O undefeated Yudhiṣṭhira,
the sky was one mahā joyous festival.

5 Mahā-illustrious Rāma,
destroyer of his enemies' cities,
after killing Rāvaṇa,
gave Laṅkā to Vibhīṣaṇa.

6 Avindhya, the wise elderly adviser of Rāvaṇa,
with Sītā in front,
and Vibhīṣaṇa following,
emerged from Laṅkā.

7 He said with the deepest humility
to the descendant of Kakutstha:
"Mahātmā, here is the devī,
the radiant daughter of Janaka."

8 Rāma, descendant of Ikṣvāku,
alighted from his chariot
when he heard this,
and saw Sītā weeping profusely.

9 He saw the faultless-figured lady
sitting in the vehicle;
sorrow-afflicted, dust-smeared,
she had unkempt hair and a dirty dress,

10 And Rāma suspected Vaidehī-Sītā
had been violated: he said:
"Princess of Videha, go!
My duty is over. You are free.

11 Gentle lady,
I have killed the night-wanderer;
why should you have to grow old in his palace,
with me still living?

12 How can a dharma-dedicated man like me
ever accept,
even for a moment,
a woman touched by another?

13 Maithilī-Sītā
whether you are violated or not –
I cannot now enjoy you –
for you are now
like the ghee of a yajña
licked by a dog."

14 Sītā-devī heard these bitter accusations
of Rāma and was so horrified
that she fell down
like an uprooted plantain tree.

15 The flush of happiness
that had appeared on her face seeing Rāma
disappeared as quickly
as breath on a mirror.

16 Hearing the allegations of Rāma,
all the tree-men,
and Lakṣmaṇa too, stood still,
as if touched by death.

17 The four-faced Deity of pure ātman,
the lotus-born Creator of the worlds,
appeared before Rāghava Rāma
in a chariot.

18 So did Śakra-Indra, Agni, Vāyu, Yama, Varuṇa,
The yakṣa-lord Bhagavān Kubera, the seven divine ṛṣis,

19 And resplendently-mantled rājā Daśaratha
Appeared before Rāma in a dazzling chariot, pulled
by *haṁsa*-swans.

20 The sky, filled with gods
and gandharvas,
glittered like an autumn night
studded with stars.

21 She stood up among all of them.
The radiant and renowned princess
of Videha
said to broad-chested Rāma:

22 "Prince, I do not blame you.
You know the ways
of men and women.
But listen to what I must say.

23 O moving air, Mātariśvan,
Air which is always moving,
Air which moves as the inmost breath of all,
O world-mothering air,
If I have done wrong,
Leave me and let me die.

24 Leave me, air!
Fire,
Water,
Ākāśa-space,
Earth,
Leave me,
If I have done wrong.

25 Even in my dreams,
O my brave husband,
Have I thought of none but you,
For you are my husband
Given to me by the gods."

26 Suddenly, sweet and auspicious voices,
which thrilled the mahā minded forest-folk,
were heard
as witnesses in the sky.

27 *"Bho! Bho!* I am the ever-moving wind-god," said Vāyu.
"She speaks the truth, O Rāghava Rāma.
The princess of Mithilā is pure, O rājā.
Be one with your wife."

28 Agni said: "O Rāghava-descendant!
"I reside in the bodies of all.
O descendant of Kakutstha,
Maithilī-Sītā is perfectly blameless."

29 "O Rāghava descendant," said Varuṇa,
"I am Varuṇa, the sap in all bodies, the rasa.
Accept the princess of Mithilā."

30 "Son," said Brahmā,
"What you have done is not surprising.
You know the dharma of rāja-ṛṣis.
But listen to me, O noble-charactered Kākutstha."

31 The enemy of the gods, the nāgas,
gandharvas, yakṣas,
Dānava anti-gods and mahā-ṛṣis
has been destroyed by your heroism.

32 By my grace, he was granted the boon
of indestructibility
For some reason I spared the scoundre
for some time.

33 Sītā was destined to be abducted
by this ill-ātmaned Rāvaṇa for his own doom.
I protected her from violation
through Nalakubara's curse.

34 That curse laid down that if Rāvaṇa
enjoyed any woman against her will,
his head would shatter
into a hundred fragments.

35 Mahā-illustrious Rāma, radiant hero,
do not have doubts about this.
You have rendered a mahā-service
to the gods."

36 "My son, you have pleased me,"
said Daśaratha.
"O Supreme-among-men Puruṣottama,
I command you to rule your kingdom."

37 "O Indra-among-rājās," replied Rāma,
"as you are my father,
accept my obedience. I will on your order
go to the lovely city of Ayodhyā."

38 O bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira!
Pleased with the pink-eyed hero Rāma,
his father again said:
"Go to Ayodhyā and reign there,

39 Because the fourteen years of your exile are over,
O mahā-radiant one."
Rāma namaskāra-ed the gods;
his friends extolled him;

40 And he was reunited with his wife,
as Mahendrā-Indra with Paulomī-Śacī.
Foe-crusher Rāma granted a boon
to Avindhya.

41 He honoured and gave wealth
to the rākṣasi Trijaṭā.
Brahmā and the gods led by Śakra-Indra
said to him:

42 "Son of Kausalyā,
what boons do you desire from us?"
Rāma asked for these –
firmness in dharma, conquest of foes,

43 And revival of the Vānaras
killed in the battle by the rākṣasa.
Brahmā intoned:
"Let it be so!"

44 And the Vānaras, O mahārāja,
sprang back to life.
And mahā-fortune-favoured Sītā
gave Hanumān this boon:

45 "My son, you will live
as long as Rāma's fame lives.
Through my favour,
divine food and drink

46 Will be always in your grasp,
O yellow-eyed Hanumān!"
Then, in front of the eyes
of the indefatigable heroes,

47 All the gods led by Indra vanished.
Śakra-Indra's charioteer, Mātali,
seeing Rāma reunited
with the daughter of Janaka, Sītā,

48 Was delighted and said to Rāma
in that assembly of friends:
"Gods, gandharvas, yakṣas,
humans, anti-gods

49 Have benefited from your perfect prowess.
Therefore,
the anti-gods, yakṣas, rākṣasas,
gandharvas, Pannagas,

50 Indeed, all the world's creatures
will honour you
as long as the world lasts."
Then the great arms-wielder Mātali

51 Offered pūjā-respect to Rāma
and left in his sun-dazzling chariot.
Rāma, with Sītā in front,
accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa

52 And by the Vānaras led by Sugrīva,
followed by Vibhīṣaṇa,
made arrangements for the protection
of Laṇkā,

53 And re-crossed the *makara*-populated ocean,
using the same bridge.
Riding in the sky-travelling chariot
Puṣpaka,

54 In which sat his advisers
in order of importance,
Rāma came to the temporary camp
of his army.

55 There the descendant of Raghu, mahātmā Rāma
summoned a meeting of the Vānaras,
and offered them
appropriate pūjā-respect,

56 After which he dismissed them,
loaded with gifts of gems.
The cow-tailed Vānara tree-men and the bears
all left;

57 And Rāma re-entered Kiṣkindhā,
accompanied by Sugrīva.
Accompanied by Sugrīva
and Vibhīṣaṇa

58 He flew in the Puṣpaka chariot,
showing Vaidehī-Sītā the forests.
Arriving in Kiṣkindhā,
foe-smiting efficient Rāma

59 Appointed the valorous Aṅgada
prince regent.
Then, with all these,
and accompanied by Sumitrā's son Lakṣmaṇa,

60 Rāma returned to his capital Ayodhyā
taking the same route by which he came.
Approaching the environs,
Rāṣṭrapati Rāma

61 Sent Hanumān as his messenger
to Bharata.
Hanumān read Bharata's mind,
and gave the good news; after which,

62 The wind-god's son returned to Rāma;
then Rāma personally went to Nandigrāma
where he saw Bharata
covered with dust,

63 Dressed in tree-bark,
sitting on the throne
with Rāma's sandals in front of him.
Meeting Bharata and Śatrughna, valiant

64 Rāghava-Rāma was delighted
along with Lakṣmaṇa
to be reunited with Bharata and Śatrughna,
as were they, O bull-brave Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira,

65 Specially when they saw
Vaidehī-Sītā too.
Honouring Rāma, Bharata happily
gave over the kingdom to Rāma,
on whose behalf
be had ruled as trustee.

66 Vāsiṣṭha and Vāmadeva together crowned Rāma
on the *muhūrta*
of the Vaiṣṇava constellation
of Śravaṇa's ascendance.

67 After his coronation,
Rāma permitted Sugrīva and his friends,
and Pulastya's son Vibhīṣaṇa,
to return to their homes.

68 He first feasted Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa,
who were overjoyed,
as was proper, and then,
reluctantly, he saw them leave.

69 Rāghava-Rāma paid pūjā-respect
to the aerial chariot Puṣpaka,
after which the descendant of Raghu
returned it to Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera.

70 Assisted by deva-ṛṣis,
he without hindrance
performed ten horse-yajñas
on the banks of the Gomatī river,
offering three times
the usual ritual gifts.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINETY-TWO

1 This was how, in the distant past,
inexhaustibly energetic Rāma
endured such agonising exile
(said Mārkaṇḍeya).

2 Therefore, do not lament –
you, tormentor of foes, tiger-among-men,
are a Kṣatriya. You must use arms
and achieve success.

3 You have not incurred
even an iota of blame.
Indra, the gods and anti-gods also
walk the same path as you.

4 The thunderbolt-wielder, helped by the Maruts,
killed Vṛtra,
the allegedly invincible Namuci,
and the rākṣasi Dīrghajihvā.

5 The man who has support in this world
gets all desires fulfilled.
Is anything beyond the man
whose brother is Dhanañjaya-Arjuna?

6 Bhīma of dreadful deeds
is the bravest of the brave;
Mādrī's two heroic sons are known
as mahā-bowmen.

7 O foe-tormentor, why do you grieve?
You have supporters
who can vanquish the thunder-wielder Indra
and the Maruts.

8 O bull-brave Bharata,
with the help of these god-like bowmen,
you will be able to defeat
all your foes in battle.

9 For look, these mahā-ātmaned ones
of marvellous feats,
when the wicked Sindhu king Jayadratha
swollen with pride and lust,

10 Abducted Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, –
they rescued her.
They defeated and humiliated
rājā Jayadratha.

11 Rāma, without such help,
killed the ten-necked rākṣasa
of tremendous valour,
and rescued Vaidehī-Sītā.

12 Think of this, O rājā,
and consider it seriously –
Rāma's only allies were black-faced bears
and beast-like tree-men.

13 O best of the Kurus, O bull-brave Bharata,
do not grieve.
O foe-tormentor, mahātmās like you
must never despair.

14 Reassured in this manner
by the wise ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya
(said Vaiśampāyana),
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira asked him a question.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINETY-THREE

1 "Mahā-muni," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"I am not sorry for myself,
nor my brothers, nor my kingdom's loss
I feel sorry for Draupadī.

2 When the ill-ātmaned sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
beat us at dice,
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī saved us. The same Draupadī
was abducted by Jayadratha.

3 Have you ever heard of a woman
as mahā-fortune-favoured
and husband-devoted as Draupadī?
Have you ever seen one?"

4 Listen to me, rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
(Mārkaṇḍeya replied),
I will tell you about a paragon
of a princess called Śāvitrī.

5 There was a mahātmā dharmātmā
supreme-in-dharma rājā
of the Madra-territory – a disciplined king,
devoted to truth and to Brahmins.

6 His name was Aśvapati; he was engaged in yajñas,
he was benevolent to an extreme,
competent, popular,
always seeking his subjects' welfare.

7 That truth-speaking, self-subdued king
had no children –
and this pained him,
for he was getting on in years.

8 He observed strict vows, ate frugally,
and always at the proper times,
and practised brahmacarya,
hoping to get children.

9 That finest of rājās offered ten thousand
ritual oblations chanting the Sāvitrī mantra,
himself eating frugally
at the sixth hour.

10 He observed all this faithfully
for eighteen years.
After the eighteenth year,
Sāvitrī bestowed her pleasure.

11 O rājā! She rose joyfully from the fire
of the *agnihotṛ*,
and appeared before the king.
She was eager
to reward the king
for his continued devotion,

12 So, following the ritual practice,
Sāvitrī said to Aśvapati:
"King, your brahmacarya, self-control,
purity, strict vows,
your sustained bhakti –
all these have pleased me.

13 Aśvapati, rājā of Madra,
ask a boon from me.
Do not, however, ask for anything
contrary to dharma."

14 Aśvapati said, "Dharma inspired me
to observe these vows
to obtain children.
Devī, grant that I get many worthy sons.

15 Devī, if you are pleased with me,
grant me this boon,
for the twice-born have said
having children is the primary dharma."

16 "I knew of your desire beforehand, O rājā,"
replied Sāvitrī,
"and spoke about your children
to Bhagavān Pitāmaha Brahmā.

17 Noble one, through the grace
of the Self-Born Svayambhu Divinity,
you will soon have
a radiantly beautiful daughter.

18 You do not have to express
any grateful feelings about this.
I tell you this gladly on instructions
from Pitāmaha Brahmā."

19 The king accepted the words of Sāvitrī,
agreeing to do as she willed,
and hoped
it would happen soon.

20 Sāvitrī disappeared,
and the king returned to his city.
He lived in his kingdom,
ruling his subjects with dharma.

21 Time passed,
and the strict-vowed rājā
discovered his dharma-observing eldest wife
was pregnant.

22 O bull-brave Bharata,
the womb of the princess of Mālava grew large
like the star-lording moon in the sky
in the bright fortnight.

23 And when her time came,
she gave birth to a daughter with lotus-eyes.
The excellent king performed
the natal rituals.

24 Because Sāvitrī-devī gladly bestowed
this daughter after his oblations,
the king and the Brahmins
named the girl Sāvitrī.

25 The daughter of the king grew up
to be like the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī,
and soon entered
the prime of youth.

26 When they saw that slim-waisted
graceful-hipped beauty,
like a golden statue, the subjects thought:
We have a goddess!

27 The lotus-eyed girl was so impossibly lovely,
so awesome in her dazzling splendour,
that none dared
to marry her.

28 On a certain festival,
Sāvitrī observed her fast, bathed her head,
and requested the Brahmins
to honour the family deity
with oblations placed
before the sacred fire.

29 Taking the flowers offered to the deity,
the Śrī-lovely devī,
blazing with beauty,
went to her mahā-ātmaned father.

30 She touched the feet of her father
and gave him the flowers;
the lovely-thighed girl did *añjali*
and stood beside her father.

31 Seeing that his goddess-lovely girl
had reached puberty,
and still no suitors came for her,
the king was worried.

32 "My child," he said,
"it is time you were married.
None has approached me.
Go and choose a husband worthy of you.

33 When you have found him, tell me.
Choose as you please,
and I will, after due consideration,
give you to him.

34 Gracious girl,
listen as I repeat to you
what I have heard the twice-born recite
from the dharma-śāstras.

35 'Blame falls on the father
who does not give his daughter
in marriage; blame falls on the husband
who does not have intercourse
with his wife in her season;
disgrace falls on the son
who does not support
a widowed mother.'

36 So listen to me,
and quickly find yourself a husband.
Behave in a way that escapes blame
from the gods."

37 With these words to his daughter
spoken in front of his ministers,
the king made preparations
for her departure.

38 Cheerfully, purposefully, shyly,
she touched his feet,
and obedient to his instructions
left the palace.

39 Seated in a golden chariot,
with the ministers around her,
she visited the enchanting groves of tapasyā
of the rāja-ṛṣis.

40 Child, *tāta,* dear Yudhiṣṭhira!
Touching the feet of her father and the elders,
she went to one forest after another
on her mission.

41 The princess was generous with gifts
at the various *tīrthas*
in all the places inhabited
by the finest of the twice-born.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINETY-FOUR

1 O descendant of Bharata (Mārkaṇḍeya continued),
the Madra-rājā Aśvapati
happened to be with Nārada
in his court one day,

2 When Sāvitrī returned from her visit
to the āshrams and *tīrthas*
and with the ministers
approached her father.

3 The lovely girl, seeing her father
talking to Nārada,
honoured both by bowing her head
at their feet.

4 "King," asked Nārada,
"where did your daughter go,
where is she returning from?
Why is she still unmarried?"

5 "O deva-ṛṣi! That is why she went,"
said Aśvapati, "and why she has just returned.
She will describe her choice
of her husband."

6 The lovely girl treated the words of her father
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya)
as if they were a god's,
and explained what had happened.

7 "In the Śālva-kingdom," said Sāvitri,
"was a dharmātmā ruler Dyumatsena,
who progressively lost
his eyesight.

8 That blind king had a baby son.
Taking advantage of his blindness,
an ambitious neighbour
seized his kingdom.

9 Taking his wife,
with the baby at her breast,
he went to a mahā-forest,
practising strict-vowed mahā-tapasyā.

10 His son Satyavān is city-born
but āshram-bred;
he is the man I have chosen
as my husband."

11 "Aho! This is mahā-wrong, O king,"
said Nārada,
"that Sāvitrī, not knowing,
should choose noble Satyavān.

12 True, his father is a truth-speaker,
his mother too.
That is why Brahmins named him Satyavān,
the 'Truth-Speaker'.

13 As a child he loved to play with clay horses
which he moulded, and also painted –
so he is also Cītrāśva,
the 'Horse-Painter'."

14 "Is prince Satyavān," asked the rājā,
"who is so devoted to his father,
brave, intelligent,
energetic and patient?"

15 Nārada replied, "Brave as Mahendra-Indra,
intelligent as Bṛhaspati,
energetic as the sun,
patient as the earth."

16 "Is the rājā's son," asked Aśvapati,
"Brahmin-like,
is he handsome, generous, friendly
and compassionate?"

17 "His charity," replied Nārada,
"equals that of Rantideva,
Saṁkṛti's son;
he is indeed Brahmin-like;
he is as truthful as Śibi,
the son of Uśīnara.

18 Dyumatsena's son Satyavān is brave,
he is generous like Yayāti,
eye-pleasing like the moon,
handsome like the twin Aśvins.

19 He has self-restraint, modesty, heroism, truth;
his senses are subdued;
he is loyal, patient,
and unmalicious.

20 Men of the intensest tapasyā
and moral dependability
say that Satyavān is a man
of absolute integrity."

21 "*Bhagavan*, revered one," said Aśvapati,
"you have mentioned all his virtues.
Does he have any defects?
Tell me."

22 "Only one defect," replied Nārada,
"and that defect
cancels out all his virtues.
Nothing can remove that defect.

23 Only one defect – and none other.
Satyavān does not have long to live.
A year from now
he will die."

24 "O lovely Sāvitrī," said the rājā,
"go and find yourself
some other husband.
He has an all-merit-cancelling mahā-defect.

25 Bhagavān Nārada,
whom the gods honour,
says that a year from now,
short-lived Satyavān will die."

26 "Once only is property inherited,"
replied Sāvitrī,
"once only is a daughter bestowed,
once only does a father say,
'I give my daughter'.
Once only these three.

27 Short-lived or long-lived,
with virtues or without virtues –
I have chosen my husband.
I cannot choose another.

28 First comes the thought, then the words,
then the deed.
What I have done today is witness
to this truth."

29 "Best among men," declared Nārada,
"your daughter has decided.
Nothing can shake her
from her dharma.

30 The virtues that Satyavān possesses,
no one else has.
I would therefore recommend
you give your daughter to him."

31 The rājā said, "Your words are right;
bhagavan, revered one,
they should not, be disregarded.
You are my guru, I will do as you say."

32 "May your daughter Sāvitrī be bestowed
without any regret," said Nārada.
"And may you prosper.
I must go now."

33 Saying this, Nārada rose to the sky
and returned to heaven.
And the rājā began preparing
for his daughter's marriage.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINETY-FIVE

1 Keeping in mind Narada's advice
about the marriage of his daughter,
the king started preparing
for the wedding.

2 He invited the elderly Brahmins,
the *ṛtviks* and the *purohitas,*
and on an auspicious day
set out with Sāvitrī

3 To the āshram of Dyumatsena
in the forest.
Aśvapati and the Brahmins
walked up to the rāja-ṛṣi.

4 They saw the mahā-fortune-favoured
sightless king
sitting on a mat of *kuśa*-grass
under a *śāla*-tree.

5 Rājā Aśvapati, following tradition,
offered pūjā-respect to the rāja-ṛṣi,
and introduced himself
briefly.

6 The dharma-observing rājā Dyumatsena
offered a seat to rājā Aśvapati,
then *arghya*-welcome, and a cow,
and enquired about his purpose.

7 Aśvapati explained his intentions
regarding Satyavān,
giving in detail the purpose
of his visit to the āshram.

8 "O dharma-following rāja-ṛṣi,"
said Aśvapati,
"this lovely girl is my daughter Sāvitrī;
I will be honoured
if, following dharma, you accept her
as your daughter-in-law."

9 "We have taken to the woods,
being exiled from our kingdom,
to cultivate dharma,"
Dyumatsena replied.
"Will your daughter, unused
to hardship, enjoy this?"

10 "My daughter and I
are aware that joy
and sorrow come and go,"
replied Aśvapati.
"King, do not say this!
I have come prepared.

11 I have greeted you in friendship.
Do not refuse me.
I have come to you with love –
you cannot refuse me.

12 You and I are equals,
worthy of each other.
Take my daughter as Satyavān's wife
and your daughter-in-law."

13 “A long time ago,” said Dyumatsena,
“I had hoped to make alliance with you.
I could not
because I lost my kingdom.

14 Let today see the fruition
of that long-cherished desire.
Let it be so!
You are my most honoured guest.”

15 The two kings invited the twice-born residents
of all the āshrams,
and had the wedding performed
according to tradition.

16 Aśvapati gave away his daughter
with suitable gifts,
and happily departed with his followers
for his kingdom.

17 Satyavān had an all-guṇa-graced wife,
and Sāvitrī the husband
that she had desired.
Both rejoiced.

18 After her father had left,
Sāvitrī stored all her ornaments,
and dressed in bark
and saffron cloth.

19 She pleased all in the āshram
with her continual care,
goodness, affection,
and her uncomplaining helpfulness.

20 She pleased her mother-in-law
by attending to the needs of her body,
with dresses, and the like;
and her father-in-law
by controlling her words
and treating him like a god.

21 She pleased her husband with sweet words,
skilfulness and gentle behaviour,
and attentions paid to him
in private.

22 O Bhārata Yudhiṣṭhira!
Practising tapasyā in the āshram,
these two passed their days uneventfully
(said Mārkaṇḍeya).

23 Sāvitrī, asleep or awake,
could not forget
the words of Nārada.
They haunted her day and night.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINETY-SIX

1 Many days passed (said Mārkaṇḍeya)
and the time
for the death of Satyavan approached
at last.

2 The words of Nārada hung heavy
on her heart,
Sāvitrī counted each day
as it came and went.

3 Calculating that her husband's death
was four days away,
she kept the three-nights vow,
lasting day and night.

4 Getting to know of her vow,
king Dyumatsena was disturbed;
he went to her
and tried to console her;

5 "Princess, you have taken
a specially rigorous vow.
It is difficult to fast
for three days and nights."

6 "Dear father, *tāta,* do not worry,"
she replied,
"I will succeed. I am firm –
and determination leads to success."

7 "It is not for me," said Dyumatsena,
"to say you should not keep your vow.
I should rather say,
'Complete your vow.'"

8 Mahā-minded Dyumatsena said this,
and stopped (continued Mārkaṇḍeya).
And Sāvitrī, stiff as a wood figure,
continued her fast.

9 O bull-brave Bharata!
Aware that her husband would die the next day,
grief-stricken, fast-emaciated Sāvitrī
sat up the whole night.

10 The sun came up about two arm's-lengths
above the horizon.
She thought: *Today is the day*,
and offered oblations in the sacred fire.

11 She bowed before the elderly twice-born,
her father-in-law, and mother-in-law,
one by one,
and offered them *añjali*.

12 All the ascetics of the hermitage,
blessing Sāvitrī,
uttered the benediction
that she would never be a widow.

13 But Sāvitrī was thinking of something else.
She said absentmindedly,
"May it be so", and vaguely accepted
the words of the ascetics.

14 She recalled the words of Nārada;
the dejected princess
could think only of that ominous appearance
of Cosmic Time Kāla.

15 O excellent Bharata,
her father-in-law and mother-in-law
went to her – she was sitting alone –
hoping to cheer the princess.

16 “You have kept the vow as promised,”
said her father-in-law.
“You must now eat.
You must do what has to be done.”

17 “When the sun sets,” replied Sāvitrī,
“I will take my meal.
I made that vow.
And I will keep it.”

18 Even as Sāvitrī was saying this about her meal
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya)
Satyavān, carrying an axe,
prepared to go to the woods.

19 Sāvitrī said to him,
“My husband, please do not go alone.
Let me go with you.
I do not want to be away from you.”

20 “Lovely wife,” replied Satyavān,
“you have never been in the woods before.
The path is rough.
Your fast, furthermore,
has weakened you –
how will you keep up with me?”

21 “I am neither weakened nor tired by the fast,”
Sāvitrī said,
“and I want to go.
Do not refuse me.”

22 “Since you want so much to go,”
said Satyavān,
“I will let you. Lest blame follow,
take my parents’ permission.”

23 Mahā-vow-observing Sāvitrī went
to her father-in-law and mother-in-law,
and said, “My husband goes to gather fruits
in the mahā-forest.

24 I would like your permission
and my father-in-law’s permission
to accompany him.
Today I must be with him.

25 Your son goes for the sacred *agnihotṛ* fire
for the sake of his superiors.
Do not pervent him. For any other reason –
but not this.

26 For nearly a year
I have not ventured out at all.
I have a deep desire today
to go to the woods."

27 "From the day Sāvitrī became
my daughter-in-law,"
Dyumatsena said, "I cannot recall
she asking for anything.

28 Let my daughter-in-law have her wish.
Go, my daughter,
and see that Satyavān walks
the right path."

29 Getting their permission, she smiled.
Illustrious Sāvitrī went smiling with her husband,
but there was pain
in her heart.

30 The large-eyed lady saw on all sides
of the forest
exquisitely-enchanting vistas
of peacock-populated trees.

31 Sātyavān said gently to Sāvitrī:
"Look at these rivers
flowing with sacred water
and these flowering trees."

32 Blameless Sāvitrī looked at him closely,
observing his every gesture.
She recalled Nārada's words,
and she saw her husband as one doomed.

33 Her heart was divided into two:
she replied to her husband,
and, following him slowly,
she waited for his death.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINETY-SEVEN

1 Sturdy Satyavān, accompanied by Sāvitrī,
gathered fruits
and filled his basket;
then he started cutting a tree.

2 As he was lopping off the branches,
he began sweating profusely;
his head ached
because he had worked hard.

3 Feeling dizzy,
he said to his beloved wife Sāvitrī:
"I must have worked too hard.
I have a headache.

4 My body is aching,
and there is a pain in my chest.
O soft-speaking Sāvitrī,
I think I am unwell.

5 I feel arrows piercing my head.
Auspicious wife,
I must lie down, and rest.
I find I cannot stand."

6 Sāvitrī quickly went near him.
She sat on the ground
and placed his head
in her lap.

7 The lady of tapasyā
recalled the words of Nārada,
wondering if this was the *muhūrta,*
the time, the day, the instant.

8 Suddenly there was a red-robed figure
in front of her –
a huge figure, wearing a diadem,
blazing like the sun.

9 His skin was dark-yellow, he had flaming eyes,
and he carried a noose.
A fearful sight!
He looked at Satyavān.

10 She gently lifted her husband's head
and rested it on the ground.
She rose, did *añjali*, trembling,
and sadly said:

11 "You look superhuman,
you must be a god.
Tell me, lord of gods, who you are,
and what you wish."

12 "Sāvitrī, you are a lady of tapasyā,
devoted to your husband –
that is why I answer you.
Lovely lady, I am Yama.

13 The life of this prince, your husband, Satyavān,
is over.
I must tie him up and take him away.
That is why I am here."

14 "*Bhagavan,* revered one" said Sāvitrī, "it is said
you send messengers to take away mortals.
Lord, *prabhu*,
why have you come personally?"

15 The rājā-of-the-*pitṛs* Bhagavān Yama
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya)
disclosed everything about the reason for his visit
in order to please her.

16 "I am here in person," he said,
"because my messengers are not fit
to bring such an ocean-vast, accomplished,
handsome man of dharma."

17 Yama, with a swift jerk,
pulled out of Satyavān's body
a thumb-sized being, and trussed Satyavān
firmly with his noose.

18 With its *prāṇa* gone,
the breath-less body lost its glow;
it became inert,
and displeasing to the sight.

19 Yama dragged it and went southwards.
Grief-stricken Sāvitrī,
devoted to her husband, mahā-fortune-favoured,
steadfast-vowed Sāvitrī, illustrious lady,
followed Yama
wherever he went.

20 "Sāvitrī," said Yama, "go back!
Perform his last rites.
Your duty to your husband is over.
You must stop here."

21 "The eternal dharma," replied Sāvitrī,
"is that I follow my husband
wherever he goes,
wherever he is taken.

22 Nothing can interfere with this –
my tapasyā, my guru-bhakti,
my love for him, vow, and your grace
assure me of this.

23 The wise, who know truth, have said
one becomes friends with another
by walking seven steps with him.
I am your friend. Listen to me.

24 Those who lack discipline
follow neither hard work
nor true renunciation
nor practice of dharma;
only the disciplined
can be said to do this.
The only true knowledge
is dharma, and dharma
is the test of character.

25 By following faithfully
a single dharma,
one attains the path;
no need for a second
or a third dharma –
one dharma suffices.'

26 “Lady without blame,
your words are beautiful,
melodious and reasonable.
Ask any one boon
except your husband’s life –
and return,” said Yama.

27 “My father-in-law,
sightless and kingdomless,
lives in an āshram.
Return him his sight,
and make him sun-radiant,”
Sāvitrī requested.

28 “Lady without blame,
the boon you have asked
I gladly fulfil.
You are tired. Stop here.
Do not go further.
Return,” said Yama.

29 “I am with my husband,
I do not feel tired.
I will go where he goes.
I will go where you take him.
O excelling deity,
listen!” said Sāvitrī.

30 “Excellent is talking
to good men, excellence
excelling is friendship
with good men, fruitful
is communion with good men.
One should seek out good men.”

31 “Words so profound,
lady of loveliness!
They add to the wisdom
and pleasure of wise men.
Ask another boon –
but not his life,” said Yama.

32 “Restore the kingdom
of my wise father-in-law,”
Sāvitrī asked.
“May he follow sva-dharma
with venerable wisdom.
This is my second desire.”

33 “He will get his kingdom,
and be firm in sva-dharma.
Your boon has been granted.
Sāvitrī, go back!
Do not tire yourself.
Stop here,” said Yama.

34 “Your laws rule all creatures.
You take men by law,
and not by caprice.
O god who are Yama,
the ‘One Who Restrains’,
hear me,” said Sāvitrī:

35 “The eternal dharma of good men is:
no ill-will to anyone;
show mercy and charity in thought,
word and deed.

36 So brief in this world is man’s life,
so small his strength.
Therefore, good men are merciful
even to their enemies.”

37 “Soothing as water
to a throat-parched person
are your words,” said Yama.
“Lady of beauty,
ask one more boon –
but not Satyavān’s life.”

38 “My father is son-less.
Let him,” said Sāvitrī,
“have one hundred sons,
who will perpetuate
the royal dynasty.
I ask you this boon.”

39 "Lady of beauty,
one hundred sons
will be sired by your father.
I have granted your boon.
Sāvitrī, stop here! You have come
far too far," said Yama.

40 "Distance is no distance,
I am with my husband.
My thoughts fly ahead of me
as we walk," said Sāvitrī.
"Listen to all
that I have in my mind.

41 You are the glorious son
of Vivasvata, the sun-god,
known as Vaivasvata.
Because you judge with dharma,
impartially, you are Dharmarāja,
the Arbiter of Justice.

42 The trust we place in good men
is greater than the trust we place in ourselves,
That is why we seek the company
of good men.

43 Such trust and confidence
are rooted in friendship.
That is why we cultivate the company
of good men."

44 "Lady of beauty,
never have I heard
such words from anyone.
You please me. So ask
for a fourth boon – anything
but Satyavān's life."

45 "May I and Satyavān
have one hundred sons,
all brave and powerful,
to carry on our line.
This is the fourth boon
that I ask."

46 "One hundred sons,
all brave and powerful,
will be your delight.
And now, return!
You have come for too far
already," said Yama.

47 "Good men are always
devoted to dharma.
They do not tire,
they are not depressed.
Saintliness uniting
with goodness is fruitful.
Never need the good
fear any obstruction
from the noble-minded.

48 The truth of the saintly
is the shine of the sun;
the tapasyā of saints
is the strength of the earth.
The cause of the past
and the future are saints.
Living with the saintly, O rājā,
one never experiences
debility and sorrow.

49 Since this is the eternal way
of the good and the saintly,
goodness is expressed
in selfless service to others.

50 Favours done to good men
are never fruitless.
Such deeds are not wasted.
Goodness is expressed
in goodness of action
that cherishes creatures."

51 "The more of such sweetness,
brimming with dharma,
delighting the mind,
I hear," replied Yama,
"the more I am pleased.
Ask a priceless boon."

52 "The boon you have granted
is barren," said Sāvitrī.
"All that I ask for,
is Satyavān alive.
O bestower of honour,
without him I am dead.

53 Deprived of my husband,
where is my happiness?
where is my heaven?
Deprived of my husband,
how do I prosper?
how do I live?

54 You have graciously granted me
one hundred sons –
and taken my husband!
Let your promise be true!
All that I ask for
is Satyavān alive."

55 Yama, son of Vivasvata,
dispenser of dharma, Dharmarāja, said:
"Granted," relaxed his noose, smiled,
and said to Sāvitrī:

56 "Gentle Sāvitrī, I free your husband.
Take him back. O joy of your family!
Your words of dharma and *artha*
have captivated my mind completely.
Your husband will suffer no disease;
he will prosper.

57 He will live with you
for four hundred years.
His devotion and *yajña*-performances
will make him famous.

58 Satyavān will be father
of one hundred sons by you;
their sons and grandsons
will be rājās.

59 And the fame of your name
will spread everywhere.
Your father will have a hundred sons
by your mother

60 Mālavī; your Mālava brothers
will resemble the gods,
and their sons and grandsons
will make a splendid dynasty of Kṣatriyas."

61 Dharmarāja Yama gave these boons to Sāvitrī,
and made her retrace her steps,
after which he went back
to his abode.

62 Sāvitrī recovered her husband
by the strength of her boon;
she hurried to the spot
where his ash-wan corpse lay.

63 She saw him lying on the ground,
and sat down;
she lifted his head
and relaxed it in her lap.

64 Regaining his senses, he kept staring lovingly
at Sāvitrī,
like one who returns from a foreign land,
and he said to her:

65 "I think I have slept,
oh, for a long time.
Why didn't you wake me?
A dark man kept dragging me."

66 "O my bull-brave husband," replied Sāvitrī,
"you have indeed slept – in my lap.
The creature-capturing god
Bhagavān Yama has left.

67 O my mahā fortunate favoured husband, wake up.
You have relaxed long enough.
If you can, stand up.
For look, it is late night."

68 Regaining consciousness, Satyavān rose,
like a man
who has slept long and peacefully.
Seeing the woods, he said:

69 "Slim-waisted beauty,
I went out with you to gather fruits.
While I was cutting a tree,
my head started paining.

70 The headache so upset me
I could not even stand erect;
so I put my head in your lap.
This much I remember.

71 At the touch of your body,
I drifted into sleep.
Then everything became dark –
I saw a mahā-radiant figure.

72 Slim-waisted beauty,
tell me what happened next.
Do you know what happened?
Was it real? Was I dreaming?"

73 Sāvitrī said to him, "Prince,
the night darkens.
I will tell you tomorrow exactly
what happened.

74 Get up! Get up! And get well completely.
O noble-vowed one, meet your parents.
The sun set long ago,
the night darkens.

75 Shrill-voiced creatures of the night
are prowling near.
And I can hear animals moving
in the crackle of leaves.

76 Gruesome-looking jackals
in the south and east
have started howling fearfully,
and I am frightened."

77 Satyavān said, "Such thick darkness
covers the forest –
it looks fearful –
how will you see the paths clearly?"

78 "I saw a withered tree catch fire today,"
she replied.
"Its flames blown by the wind,
are occasionally visible.

79 I'll fetch burning twigs from the tree
and light a fire.
There are many logs here.
Do not be anxious, my husband.

80 I can see you do not feel well.
You should not go.
You will never find a path
in this thick darkness.

81 If you let me, we will go together
tomorrow when dawn breaks.
O faultless one,
we will spend the night here."

82 "My headache has gone," said Satyavān,
"I feel fit.
If you agree, I think I should go
and see my parents.

83 Never before have I been late
returning to the āshram.
My mother does not let me leave the āshram
after *saṁdhyā*-twilight.

84 If I stay out the whole day,
my parents feel anxious.
My dear father, with the āshram inmates,
starts searching for me.

85 Often in the past my mother and father,
deeply worried by my absence,
have said to me,
'You stayed out too long.'

86 What must they be feeling now,
I wonder?
They must be mahā-worried
over my absence.

87 One night, not very many days ago,
the old couple were apprehensive;
they cried
and lovingly said to me:

88 'Son, we could not live one instant
without you.
So long as you live,
we will manage to live.

89 You are our only support in old age
and blindness.
Our line, our fame, the funeral rites –
all are in your hands.'

90 My father is very old; so is my mother;
I am their only son.
They will miss me deeply
tonight.

91 I am ashamed that I dropped off
to sleep,
making my gentle parents suffer
on that account.

92 And I too suffer,
caught in this predicament.
Neither do I wish to live
without my parents.

93 I am certain my grief-stricken father
has by now
begun making enquiries at the āshram
about me.

94 Lovely lady, I do not worry about myself
so much
as I do for my father
and my frail father-devoted mother.

95 I am the cause of the anxiety
of my parents today.
I want to live only
if they live.

96 I should be dutiful,
I should make them happy."
With these words,
the respectful-to-gurus-and-to-elders dharmātmā

97 Satyavān raised his arms,
and began to grieve loudly.
Seeing him, dharma-following Sāvitrī
wiped his eyes,

98 And said:
"If ever I have done tapasyā,
If ever I have given in charity,
If I have offered oblations in the sacred fire,

99 Then may this night
Bring *puṇya*-peace to my mother-in-law,
my father-in-law and my husband
I do not recall lying even as a joke.

100 If what I have said is true,
May my father-in-law and mother-in-law
Remain alive today."
Satyavān said:
"I am eager to see my parents.
Sāvitrī, let us start.

101 Lovely thighed wife, if I find calamity
has overtaken them,
I swear by the truth of my body,
I will not live.

102 If you follow dharma,
if you wish me to live,
if your duty is to please me,
let us return to the āshram."

103 Beautiful Sāvitrī rose
and made a bun of her hair.
She gave a hand to her husband,
helping him to stand up.

104 Satyavān rose,
and ran his hands over his body.
He looked around him,
and his gaze fell on the fruit-basket.

105 Sāvitrī said to him,
"We will gather fruits tomorrow.
Let me carry your axe for you –
you are still weak."

106 She took the basket,
and hung it on a jutting branch.
Picking up the axe,
she returned to her husband.

107 The lovely-thighed lady
placed her husband's left hand
on her left shoulder,
and her right hand round his waist,
helping him, walking with the slow grace
of a she-elephant.

108 "Gentle one," said Satyavān,
"I know these paths well.
There, where the moonlight falls
between the trees,
is the main path.
I have often come on these paths.

109 We have come to the path
we took for fruit-gathering.
Lovely lady, take that path
without any hesitation.

110 Near that *palāśa*-tree,
the path branches into two;
take the one that goes to the north.
Let us hurry.

111 I feel fit now, my strength has returned.
I am eager to see my parents."
He said this,
and hurried to the āshram.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINETY-EIGHT

1 In the meantime (continued Mārkaṇḍeya),
mahā-powerful Dyumatsena
joyfully discovered that his eyesight was restored,
he could see clearly.

2 O bull-brave Bharata,
accompanied by his wife Śaibyā
he searched the āshrams for his son,
whom he feared lost.

3 That night, husband and wife
went to āshrams, rivers, woods, and lakes
in the hope
of finding their son.

4 At the faintest sound,
they would lift their heads,
saying, "This must be Satyavān,
and Sāvitrī."

5 They searched frantically
like a demented couple;
their feet were blistered
and pierced with thorns and *kuśa*-grass.

6 The Brahmin inmates of various āshrams
flocked around them.
They calmed the couple
and brought them to their āshram.

7 The tapasyā-rich elderly ascetics gathered
round the rājā and his wife
and consoled them
with soothing ancient tales of rājās.

8 The son-searching old couple
were comforted briefly,
but cried when they recalled
their son's childhood days.

9 Under the load of their sorrow,
they expressed their grief
in profound lamentation:
"Hai! My son!
Hai! My innocent daughter-in-law! Where are you?"
A truthful Brahmin named

10 Suvarcā said: "Satyavān is alive,
for his wife is a lady of tapasyā,
well-mannered
and self-restrained."

11 Gautama said, "I have read the Vedas
and their branches,
I have done mahā-tapasyā and brahmacarya,
respected my gurus and elders.

12 I have assiduously kept my vows,
and in accordance with tradition
I have often fasted
and subsisted on air.

13 This tapasyā has given me insight
into the lives of others.
I am certain
that Satyavān lives."

14 "The words of my teacher
can never be wrong,"
added a disciple of Gautama.
"Satyavān is surely alive."

15 The ṛṣis said, "His wife Sāvitrī
has all the auspicious signs
of non-widowhood.
So Satyavān lives."

16 Bharadvāja said, "His wife Sāvitrī
is a lady of tapasyā,
self-restrained and well-mannered.
so Satyavān lives."

17 Dālbha said, "You have regained your eyesight,
and Sāvitrī has completed her vow
without eating.
So Satyavān lives."

18 Āpastambha said, "From the way
birds and beasts are calling,
and you have gained sight,
surely Satyavān lives."

19 Dhaumya said,
“Your son has all the noble guṇas,
he is loved by all,
and has all the auspicious signs
that indicate long life.
It is certain that Satyavān lives.”

20 Consoled by these truth-speaking ascetics,
and pondering the words they spoke,
Dyumatsena regained
some composure.

21 Soon after this,
Sāvitrī and her Satyavan
arrived joyfully at the āshram
late at night.

22 “Lord of the earth,” said the Brahmins,
“we rejoiced
at the recovery of your sight,
and reunion with your son.

23 These three will bring you prosperity:
Your darshan of Sāvitrī,
your recovery of sight,
and your reunion with your son.

24 All that we have predicted, will happen.
Do not doubt this.
And you will prosper
from more to more.”

25 Then, Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
all the twice-born lit a fire
and sat down in front
of the earth-lord Dyumatsena.

26 Śaibyā, Satyavān, and Sāvitrī,
who were standing on one side,
with their permission
sat down also.

27 All the inhabitants of the forest,
who were sitting facing the rājā,
moved by curiosity,
enquired about Satyavān.

28 “Radiant prince,” asked the ṛṣis,
“why did you not return earlier?
Why so late at night?
What prevented you?

29 We cannot understand
why you caused such pain
to your father, mother, and us.
Tell us the reason.”

30 “With my father’s permission,” said Satyavān,
“I went to the woods with Sāvitrī,
I was cutting a tree
when I felt dizzy.

31 I felt exhausted;
I must have dozed off, it seems.
That much I remember.
I have never slept so long.

32 Nothing else happened –
you need not be anxious.
I arrived late at night to relieve your fears.
No other reason.”

33 “So you have no knowledge how your father
Dyumatsena recovered his sight,”
said Gautama.
“What has Sāvitrī to say?

34 You know the mysteries of past and future.
Sāvitrī,
I know that you shine
like Brahmā’s consort Sāvitrī.

35 You surely know what happened.
Tell us the truth.
If there is nothing that needs concealing,
tell us all.”

36 “What you know, is right,” she said.
“How can you be kept in the dark?
I have nothing to hide.
I will explain everything.

37 Mahātmā Nārada had predicted the death
of my husband.
Today was the day;
so I stayed close to my husband.

38 When he fell asleep, Yama himself appeared
with his attendants,
tied him in his noose, and walked off
to the *pitṛ*-regions.

39 I sang the praises of that deity
with true words.
He gave me five boons.
Let me describe them.

40 Two boons were for my father-in-law.
For my father
I obtained a hundred sons,
and a hundred for myself.

41 My husband Satyavān obtained
a life of four hundred years.
My vow was observed
for that purpose.

42 I have explained in detail
how the greatest sorrow of my life
was transformed
into the the greatest joy."

43 "Noble lady," said the ṛṣis,
"gentle yet determined,
well-born, self-controlled,
you rescued the line
of the Indra-among-men
from total oblivion."

44 The ṛṣis (said Mārkaṇḍeya)
pūjā-respected the lady
by singing her praises,
took leave of the Indra-among-men
and his son, and joyfully
returned to their āshrams.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINETY-NINE

1 The night ended, the sun-maṇḍala appeared
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya),
and the tapasyā-rich ascetics gathered
after their morning devotions.

2 The mahā-ṛṣis never tired
of relating again and again
Sāvitrī's mahā good fortune
to Dyumatsena.

3 One day citizens came from Śālva
to inform Dyumatsena
that his enemy had been assassinated
by the enemy's own minister.

4 They described all the events, saying,
"Hearing of the assassinations
of the usurper
and his friends
at the hands of his own minister,
and the army's disbanding,

5 The subjects have unanimously decided
to acknowledge you
as their legal monarch,
notwithstanding the fact of your blindness.

6 We have been sent with this message
by your subjects.
These chariots and your fourfold army
await your command.

7 O rājā! May you prosper!
Let us return to the kingdom,
where you will grace the throne
as your father and grandfather did."

8 When they saw the rājā had recovered
his eyesight,
they were filled with wide-eyed wonder,
and bowed before him.

9 The king offered pūjā-respect to the elderly Brahmins
of the āshram,
and with their blessings
returned to his capital.

10 Śaibyā and Sāvitrī,
guarded by soldiers,
travelled in a splendidly-decorated palanquin,
carried by men.

11 The *purohitas* joyfully celebrated
the return of Dyumatsena
as the rightful ruler,
and his mahātmā son as prince-regent.

12 In course of time Sāvitrī gave birth
to a hundred
heroic and radiant
never-retreating-from-battle sons.

13 She also had one hundred splendid
mahā-powerful brothers –
sons of Mālavī
by the king of Madra, Aśvapati.

14 Sāvitrī saved from calamity herself,
her father,
her mother-in-law, father-in-law,
and her husband.

15 In the same way, graceful and grace-blessed
Draupadī will save you
from all misfortunes.
She will be another family-devoted Sāvitrī.

16 Consoled by mahātmā Mārkaṇḍeya
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
the grief-cleansed Pāṇḍava rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
stayed on in Kāmyaka.

17 The man who listens to the excellent story
of Sāvitrī with bhakti
always finds joy and success,
never any sorrow.

SECTION THREE HUNDRED

1 Brahmin (said Janamejaya), according to you,
Lomaśa gave this
message from Indra to the son of Pāṇḍu,
Yudhiṣṭhira:

2 'When Dhanañjaya Arjuna leaves heaven,
I will remove
that terrible fear that haunts you,
which you dare not tell anyone.'

3 Tell me, excellent one,
why did dharmatama Yudhiṣṭhira
have this mahā-fear of Karṇa,
and why was he so secretive?"

4 O best of the Bharatas,
I will unfold the whole story before you
(replied Vaiśampāyana).
Listen carefully, O tiger-among-rājās.

5 When the twelfth year of forest exile ended
and the thirteenth began,
Śakra-Indra, seeking the best interests
of the Pāṇḍavas,
decided to go to Karṇa and ask him
for his flesh-ear-rings.

6 Mahārāja! The sun-god Vibhāvasu
got to know of Mahendra-Indra's intention
to take the ear-rings,
and he appeared before Karṇa.

7 That truth-speaking hero,
always dedicated to Brahmins,
was sleeping in a comfortable bed
inside luxurious sheets,

8 And the dazzling deity, O Indra-among-rājās,
moved by paternal love,
showed himself to Karṇa
in a dream.

9 By his power of yoga,
appearing as a handsome Brahmin,
erudite in the Vedas, Sūrya said gently
for the good of Karṇa:

10 "My child, Karṇa, best of truth-upholders,
mahā-muscled one,
listen to my well-meant words
that I speak out of love.

11 Karṇa, Indra desires the good
of the Pāṇḍavas:
he will come to you as a Brahmin
asking for your flesh-ear-rings.

12 Your noble principle that you never refuse
any good man who asks,
but will not yourself ask –
he, and the world, knows this.

13 My child, you give Brahmins wealth
or whatever else they ask for.
It is known
you never refuse anyone anything.

14 The punisher of the anti-god Pāka, Indra,
knows this only too well;
he will come to you in person, and beg
for your flesh-armour and ear-rings.

15 Do not give him, under any condition,
the ear-rings;
persuade him earnestly otherwise;
this is for your good.

16 He will present his own arguments,
but you must counter-argue
and refuse him.
Offer him other expensive gifts.

17 Offer Purandara-Indra, who will insist
on having only the ear-rings,
gems, women, cows, and other wealth.
Mention precedents.

18 If you hand over your auspicious ear-rings,
O Karṇa,
your life-span will be reduced,
death will overtake you.

19 O respected bestower of honour,
your armour and ear-rings
make you invincible on the battlefield,
This much I can assure you.

20 Karṇa! Your jewelled ear-rings emerged
from the nectar of non-death.
If you love life,
cherish them meticulously."

21 "Who are you," asked Karṇa, "*bhagavan,* revered one,
who loves me so deeply to speak like this?
Tell me, who are you,
in Brahmin-shape?"

22 "*Tāta*! Child," replied the Brahmin,
"I am the hundred-rayed one.
Love prompts my advice.
Follow it, and you will benefit."

23 "It is my good fortune," said Karṇa,
"that the radiant Gopati, lord of cows,
speaks for my welfare.
Listen to me!

24 You are the grace-granter!
I say this with love!
Be always gracious to me!
If you really love me,
Do not dissuade me from my vow.

25 O Vibhāvasu! Abode of Light!
The whole world knows what I have vowed.
I am ready to offer my life
To the best of the twice-born.

26 Supreme sky-straddling deity! Khecarottama!
If Śakra-Indra comes to me begging
Disguised as a Brahmin,
Seeking the good of the Pāṇḍavas

27 O finest of the excellently learned;
I will give him the armour and ear-rings,
So that nothing will diminish
My three-worlds-pervading fame.

28 It is not right
That men of our stature
Should save our skins by doing selfish deeds.
Death with honour and fame
Is preferable.

29 I will give my flesh armour and ear-rings
To Indra.
If the slayer of Bala and Vṛtra
Comes to me asking

30 For the ear-rings for the sake
Of the welfare of the Pāṇḍavas,
The world will sing my fame
And proclaim his infamy.

31 O Radiant One, I will give up life,
But I will not lose honour.
Men with honour get heaven,
Men without honour are doomed.

32 Honour is like a mother,
Protecting people.
A man without honour
Has a breathing body
But is as good as dead.

33 Vibhāvasu! Abode of light!
Lord of the worlds! Lokeśvara!
That honour is the essence of life
Is evident from this ancient śloka
Chanted by the Creator himself:

34 *In this world honour prolongs life;*
In the next it leads to fulfilment.

35 I will gain eternal honour
If I give away my body-welded ear-rings.
By giving to Brahmins
As ordained by tradition,

36 By sacrificing my life in battle
Through impossible feats
And annihilation of enemies,
I will surely get nothing but fame.

37 By sparing the frightened
Who beg for their lives in battle,
By saving old men, children,
And Brahmins from mahā-danger,

38 I will have honour in this life
And heavenly fulfilment in the next.
I am firm in this vow of mine:
I will sacrifice my life,
But not my honour.

39 Therefore, O divine one,
I will give to Maghavat-Indra
When he comes disguised as a Brahmin
Whatever he wants.
And in this way
I will find the supreme fulfilment."

SECTION THREE HUNDRED-ONE

1 "Karṇa, never do anything that harms you,
your friends, wives, children,
mother and father,"
said Sūrya.

2 "O best of life-livers!
No one really wishes to sacrifice his life,
for honour on earth
and glory in heaven.

3 If you want eternal honour
at the cost of your life,
then be assured that will be the price
you will have to pay.

4 O bull-brave mortal!
Father, mother, son,
and other relatives are so only
so long as one is alive.

5 O mahā-radiant tiger-among-men!
Rājās are brave only so long as they are alive.
Understand this well –
honour is glorious only for the living.

6 What good is honour
to a charred skeleton?
Honour is enjoyed not by the dead,
but by the living.

7 A dead man's honour is like a garland
on a skeleton.
Because you are my devoted bhakta,
I tell you this.

8 I protect my bhaktas,
so I tell you this.
I consider the fact that you,
O mahā-muscled one,
have bhakti for me, so I say this.
Take my advice.

9 There is a divine mystery in all this,
which is why I advise you
Act firmly,
and without doubts.

10 O bull-brave mortal, you are not fit
to know that which the gods do not know.
Hence my caution.
In time you will know.

11 Son of Rādhā,
let me repeat what I have said.
Listen carefully. Do not give the ear-rings
to thunder-wielding Vajrapāṇi Indra.

12 O mahā radiant one!
Your ear-rings make you shine in the sky
like the spotless moon
between the two Vīśākha stars.

13 Remember: Honour is useful only
to the living.
Tāta! My child, when Sureśvara-Indra asks
for the ear-rings, refuse him.

14 Faultless one, you will have no difficulty
in diverting Devarāja-Indra's desire
for the ear-rings
if you deal with him reasonably.

15 Speak reasonably, speak sweetly, Karṇa,
find all manner
of sensible arguments,
and frustrate Purandara-Indra's plan.

16 O tiger-among-men! Who you challenge
ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna in battle,
he is sure to accept
your challenge.

17 So long as you have your ear-rings,
Arjuna,
even with Indra's assistance,
cannot defeat you in battle.

18 Karṇa, if you have any desire at all
of defeating Arjuna on the field,
refuse Śakra-Indra
your ear-rings."

SECTION THREE HUNDRED-TWO

1 "Lord of radiance," said Karṇa,
"you know I am your bhakta;
you also know
I never refuse anyone anything.

2 The strength of the bhakti I have for you,
O lord of radiance,
makes you dearer to me than my wife,
my sons, myself, my friends.

3 O origin of splendour! You also know
that mahātmās
have special regard for those
who have bhakti.

4 Knowing that Karṇa is your dedicated bhakta,
and venerates no other god in heaven,
you have graciously given me
this advice.

5 I bow my head and seek your grace
again and again –
I beg of you, lord of fierce radiance,
forgive me for this.

6 I do not fear death so much
as I fear falsehood.
For the sake of all the noble
twice-born ones,

7 I am prepared to sacrifice my life
at any time, O divine one!
Regarding what you have told me
about Pāṇḍava Phālguna-Arjuna,

8 O origin of splendour,
let no uneasiness upset you.
I can surely defeat Arjuna
in battle.

9 O divine one, you must know about
the mahā-powerful weapons
I obtained from Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma
and mahātmā Droṇa.

10 O finest of the gods, grant me the strength
to keep my vow
to give even my life
if asked by the thunder-wielder Indra."

11 "*Tāta*! My child," said Sūrya,
"if you decide to give your flesh-ear-rings
to thunder-wielding Indra,
remember to say to him:

12 'O hundred-sacrifices' Śatakratu-Indra!
I can give my ear-rings
on one condition.'
Since no being can kill you
so long as you are in possesson
of your flesh-ear-rings,

13 The destroyer of the Dānava-anti-gods
Indra wants them only
because he wishes Arjuna
to kill you in battle.

14 Therefore, venerate city-destroying Purandara-Indra
with sweet and acceptable words,
and persuade the lord of the gods
to give you an infallible weapons. Tell him:

15 'O thousand-eyed lord,
I will give my armour and ear-rings
for a śakti-missile that will obliterate
all my enemies.'

16 Give your ear-rings to Śakra-Indra
only on that condition.
Karṇa! With that power you will destroy
all your enemies.

17 O mahā-muscled one, the rājā of the gods
possesses a śakti-missile
that returns to its wielder only after massacring
hundreds of thousands of foes."

18 O rājā! The thousand-rayed lord said this
and disappeared.
Karṇa woke from his dream, muttering to himself.
O Bharata descendant,
Rādhā's son interpreted the dream
and decided

19 In the following way to obtain
the śakti-missile:
If foe-chastising Indra should ask
for my flesh-earrings,

20 *I will refuse to part with them*
unless he gives me his śakti.
Making up his mind,
Karṇa, the next morning,

21 Received blessings from Brahmins,
and proceeded, O tiger-among-rājās,
to perform his *japa*-meditations, as required,
at the *muhūrta.*
At the end of his *japa*-meditations,
Vṛṣa-Karṇa told the Sun

22 In great detail all that had happened,
the dream,
and the conversation between him and Sūrya
during the night.

23 The radiant lord of light, Bhagavān Bhānu-Sūrya,
the devourer of Svarbhānu-Rāhu,
listened, smiled, and said to Karṇa,
"It is all true."

24 Rādhā's son, slayer of his enemies,
his dream confirmed,
waited for Vāsava-Indra, eager to obtain
Indra's śakti-missile.

SECTION THREE HUNDRED-THREE

1 "What was the secret that the hot-rayed god
would not divulge to Karṇa
(asked Janamejaya)?
What were these special ear-rings made of?
What was the special armour
that Karṇa wore?

2 O tapasyā-rich ascetic,
where did he get that armour
and those ear-rings?
Tell me – I am most curious."

3 O rājā! I will tell you all
(said Vaiśampāyana)
about the secret of the ray-wealthy god,
the armour, and the pair of ear-rings.

4 A long time ago, O rājā,
a radiant Brahmin,
tall, bearded, matted-haired, carrying a staff,
came to king Kuntibhoja.

5 He had an excellent figure,
he flamed with glory, he was handsome,
sallow-complexioned, sweet-speaking,
learned in the Vedas.

6 The Brahmin of mahā-tapasyā said
to rājā Kuntibhoja:
"Pride-less one, I wish to eat an alms-meal
at your house.

7 I will stay in your house,
but on one condition –
neither you nor your attendants
must ever obstruct me.

8 I will go when I please, not go when I please.
When I eat, when I sleep,
O rājā,
no one must disturb me."

9 Kuntibhoja said gladly, "It will be done –
even more than you desire."
Then he said again
to the Brahmin:

10 "O mahā-wise one, I have a daughter
whose name is Pṛthā.
She is gentle, good-mannered, strict-vowed,
and beautiful.

11 She will attend to your needs
with pūjā-respect.
She will never disturb you.
You will be pleased with her behaviour."

12 He paid pūjā-respect to the Brahmin,
and went
to his large-eyed daughter Pṛthā
and said to her:

13 "This mahā-fortune-favoured Brahmin,
my child, wishes to be our guest.
I have already agreed
to his request.

14 Look to his needs
with the most meticulous care, my daughter.
Act in a manner that honours
my word to him.

15 This bhagavān Brahmin is gifted
with mahā tapasyā and radiance –
he is learned in the Vedas –
give him what he asks, gladly.

16 Brahmins possess supreme energy and tapasyā.
It's because the Brahmins namaskāra him,
that the Sun shines
in the sky.

17 Because they refused to honour
honourable Brahmins,
the mahā-anti-god Vātāpi and Tālajaṅgha
were destroyed by Brahmā.

18 My child, I place this noble Brahmin
in your care. A mahā-burden!
Take the greatest care
when you minister to him

19 Worshipfully. Dear daughter,
I know that from your very childhood,
you have carefully attended to Brahmins,
and to gurus, elders, relatives,

20 Friends, servants,
to your mothers and to myself.
You have been solicitous
to everyone.

21 Symmetrically-figured girl, you have behaved
so well that, no one, in the inner apartments,
in city or palace, not even servants,
finds fault with you.

22 That is why I have considered you worthy
of ministering to Brahmins,
who tend to be often
very temperamental.
Pṛthā, you were a young girl.
when I adopted you.

23 You are the daughter of Śūra
of the Vṛṣṇi race.
Your father happily let you be
my adopted daughter.

24 You are Vasudeva's sister,
and the best of my children.
Your father had promised
he would give his girl-child to me.

25 With such a linerge and such an upbringing,
you are indeed a lotus,
moved from one lake to another,
bringing joy to both.

26 Lovely one, girls in lowborn families,
no matter how strongly disciplined,
tend to develop distinct defects
of character.

27 But you, Pṛthā, have royal blood
and breathtaking beauty.
You, lovely girl, are gifted
with every possible accomplishment.

28 Therefore, lovely Pṛthā, forget your pride,
and exclusiveness,
and fact of noble birth,
and serve this Brahmin
who is capable of granting boons.
You will be favoured.

29 In this, auspicious girl,
you will find fulfilment.
But if you excite this excellent Brahmin's anger,
he will doom our race."

SECTION THREE HUNDRED-FOUR

1 "O Indra-among rājās," replied Kuntī,
"I will offer pūjā-respect
to the Brahmin steadfastly, as you desire.
I am not lying.

2 To offer pūjā to Brahmins
is second nature with me.
To please you is my pleasure
and highest fulfilment.

3 The bhagavān Brahmin will never be displeased
with me, whether he comes
in the morning, evening, or night –
or at midnight.

4 O finest among men, it is beneficial for me
to offer pūjā-respect to the twice-born,
to obey you, and do good to you,
O Indra-among-rājās.

5 You can set your mind at rest.
I can assure you, O Indra-among-rājās,
that excellent Brahmin
will not be dissatisfied here.

6 I will be specially solicitous, faultless father,
to please this Brahmin
and to obey you.
Do not have any doubts about this.

7 Mahā-fortune-favoured Brahmins, O lord of the earth,
when pleased, even offer liberation;
if displeased,
they can dispense destruction.

8 I know this well, and will therefore please
the Brahmin well, O rājā.
From my side, you will never have any cause
for complaint.

9 O Indra-among-rājās, royal negligence
turns Brahmins into a rājā's agents of ruin;
Cyavana cursed Śaryāti
because of Sukanyā.

10 I will follow your instructions faithfully,
concerning this Brahmin.
O Indra-among-men! I will see that he is kept
eminently pleased."

11 She kept repeating her words;
the rājā thanked
and embraced her, and gave her
very careful directions.

12 "Gentle, blameless girl," said the rājā,
"if you do this, you will promote
my welfare and your welfare
and the family's welfare."

13 Then the mahā-illustrious Kuntibhoja,
friend of Brahmins,
brought his daughter Pṛthā
before the twice-born one, saying:

14 "Brahmin, this is my daughter;
she is young and used to comfort.
If she makes a mistake,
do not take it to heart.

15 Mahā-fortune-favoured Brahmins like you
should not get angry
with old men, children, and men of tapasyā
even if they offend.

16 The twice-born should forgive
even serious misdemeanour;
excellent Brahmins accept any pūjā
that is sincerely offered."

17 The Brahmin replied, "So be it."
The rājā
happily accommodated him in a swan-white,
moon-white mansion.

18 In the *agnihotṛ*-room,
the king supplied a magnificent seat,
along with varieties of excellent food
and other essentials.

19 Overcoming pride and laziness,
princess Pṛthā made every effort
to attend to the needs
of the Brahmin.

20 The chaste Pṛthā
went to the Brahmin
and served him as if he were a god.
He was delighted.

SECTION THREE HUNDRED-FIVE

1 Mahārāja, that vow-observing girl
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
began with a pure heart to gratify
the vow-strict Brahmin.

2 O Indra-among-rājās, the excellent Brahmin
would sometimes say,
"I will be here in the morning,"
and return at evening or late night.

3 But that girl, whatever the hour,
entertained him
with delicious food and drink,
always with profound pūjā-respect.

4 Her devoted service to him
regarding food, seat, and bed,
instead of diminishing, actually increased
day by day.

5 O rājā! Even if the Brahmin scolded her,
criticising and speaking harshly,
Pṛthā did not do anything disagreeable
in return.

6 Often the Brahmin would come late
or never turn up;
he would ask for food almost impossible
to procure.

7 But Pṛthā always said, "It's ready",
and served his meal.
Like a disciple, like a son,
like a sister, sincerely,

8 That faultless gem-like girl
kept attending on him,
and gave that excellent Brahmin
exactly what he wanted.

9 The finest of the twice-born ones
was greatly gratified
by her unceasing devotion
to his every need and demand.

10 Her father would ask her every morning,
"Daughter,
is the Brahmin pleased
with your attentions?"

11 And that illustrious girl would reply,
"Yes, very pleased."
The mahā-minded king Kuntibhoja
was overjoyed.

12 After a whole year had passed,
and that best of *japa*-meditating Brahmins
found no fault with Pṛthā
devotedly serving him,

13 He was so delighted that he summoned her
and said:
"Gentle, graceful girl,
I am greatly pleased with you.

14 Auspicious girl, ask for a boon,
a difficult one,
which will make you more honoured
than all other women."

15 "O best of Veda-knowers," said Kuntī,
"my desires are granted
seeing you and my father happy.
I need no boon."

16 "Śucismitā, sweet-smiling one,"
said the Brahmin, "in that case,
instead of a boon, take this god-invoking mantra
from me.

17 Whichever god you summon
by chanting the mantra,
gentle girl, he will completely be
in your control.

18 Whether he likes it or not,
the god you invoke with this mantra
will come and please you
like a humble servant."

19 O King! She was afraid that if she refused him
a second time,
the finest of the twice-born ones
would curse her.

20 O rājā! That Brahmin then initiated
that fautless-figured girl
into the mantra that is revealed in the beginning
of the Atharva-śiras Upaniṣad.

21 O Indra-among-rājās,
after thus initiating her,
he said to Kuntibhoja,
"Gratified with your daughter, O rājā,

22 I have lived in your house,
receiving her pūjā-respect.
Now I must go."
Saying this, he suddenly vanished.

23 The rājā, seeing the twice-born one
disappear suddenly,
was awe-struck.
He offered his pūjā-respect to Pṛthā.

SECTION THREE HUNDRED-SIX

1 After the excellent Brahmin had left,
Kuntī, for some reason,
wondered if the mantra
would really work.

2 *What kind of mantra is this*
that the mahātmā
has graciously given me?
Let me test it and find out.

3 Even as she thought this,
she noticed she was menstruating.
Because she was still unmarried,
this filled her with shame.

4 One day she was resting
in a mahā-luxurious bed in her room
when she saw the sun-maṇḍala
rising in the east.

5 The eyes and mind of the slim-waisted beauty
were riveted on the sun.
She was enraptured
by its morning-saṁdhyā loveliness.

6 She had a sudden divine darshan.
She saw the radiant deity
dressed in armour
and wearing ear-rings.

7 O lord of men! She became eager
to test the mantra then and there.
The lovely girl decided to invoke
the sun-god.

8 Restraining her life-breath by *prāṇāyāma*,
she invoked Divākara, the day-creator.
And soon enough, O rājā,
he appeared before her:

9 Honey-yellow skin
Mahā-powerful arms
Conchshell neck
Smiling face
Bracelets-wearing
Diadem-crowned
Everywhere-flaming.

10 Through yoga he divided into two,
one dazzling in the sky,
the other appearing before her.
He said very gently to Kuntī:

11 "Gentle girl, the strength of your mantra
has put me in your power.
Tell me what you desire, rānī,
and I will give it."

12 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one," said Kunti,
"return to the place from where you have come.
I was only curious.
Be kind to me, *bhagavan*."

13 "Slender-waisted beauty," Sūrya said,
"I will go, as you have asked.
But invoking a god in vain
is not right.

14 Fortunate, favoured girl,
your desire is to have a son by Sūrya,
a son with flesh-armour-and-ear-rings,
unrivalled in bravery.

15 Graceful elephant-gaited girl,
give yourself up to me.
Lovely-figured one, you will then have
your desired son.

16 Susmitā, sweet-smiling one,
after intercourse with you, I will leave.
If today you refuse to do
as I have lovingly asked you, gentle girl,

17 I will in anger curse you, the Brahmin,
and your father.
They will be destroyed by me,
all because of you.

18 I will burn your foolish father,
who knows nothing of this,
and the Brahmin who gave you
the mantra

19 Without knowing your character
and your desires.
The gods in heaven, led by the destroyer-of-cities
Purandara-Indra

20 Are laughing at me,
seeing me deceived by you.
Look at them with your celestial gift of vision,
you ravishing girl,
the same vision
by which you saw me."

21 The princess beheld
the gods in their various
abodes in heaven,
exactly as she had
earlier beheld the radiant
sun-god Āditya.

22 Seeing them, the devī
felt suddenly ashamed.
She said to Sūrya:
"Go, radiant Gopati!
I am a virgin.
You have insulted me.

23 Only father, mother, elder
or guru is entitled
to give me to another.
I am firm in my dharma.
The world offers pūjā
to a chaste woman.

24 Lord of radiance!
I was girlishly curious, Vibhāvasu!
I only wanted to test the mantra.
Forgive an impulsive girl, lord."

25 "Because you are girlish,"
said Surya, "I am gentle.
I would not be so with others.
O delicate Kuntī,
give yourself to me,
and get peace of mind.

26 Beautiful girl, you are the one
who invoked the mantra.
I will not leave
till I have enjoyed you.

27 Lovely one, if I go away,
I will become the fool of the world.
All the gods will laugh at me,
gracious girl.

28 O lovely-figured one!
Come, have intercourse with me.
The son born to you will be like myself,
and you will be praised in the worlds.".

SECTION THREE HUNDRED-SIX

1 The strong-willed virgin
tried every sweet persuasion,
but she could not make
the thousand-rayed god relent.

2 When all her entreaties
to the darkness-dispeller failed, O rājā,
fear of the curse made her reflect
in this manner:

3 *What is the best means of saving*
my innocent father and the Brahmin
from the curse
of the angered sun-god Vibhāvasu?

4 *Innocent young people*
should be very careful
and not provoke foolishly
men of energy and tapasyā.

5 *I have behaved impulsively*
and am now in Sūryā's power.
How can I allow this forbidden surrender
of my body?

6 Thoughts of the curse weighed heavily
 on Kuntī's mind.
Petrified, she could not decide
 what to do.

7 Lord of the world, O excellent rājā!
 Afraid of the censure
of her friends,
 afraid of the threatened curse,
she said, trembling with shame,
 to the sun-god:

8 "My father, my mother, and my relatives
 are living.
As long as they are alive,
 how can I defy custom?

9 O sun-god,
 if I have illicit intercourse with you,
the honour of my family
 will be forever sullied.

10 But if, O finest of radiant ones,
 you consider intercourse without family consent
consistent with dharma,
 I will satisfy your kāma.

11 O irresistible deity, you are the source
 of dharma, fame, honour, and life –
shall I remain virginal
 after surrendering to you?"

12 "Śucismitā, sweet-smiling one,"
 Sūrya said to Kuntī,
"your father, mother, and guru-elders are helpless in this.
 Listen, lovely-thighed lady.

13 Lovely girl, you are a virgin, a *kanyā* –
 and *kanyā* derives from kāma, to lust;
O graceful-hipped girl,
 a *kanyā* is one who desires every man.
O beautiful complexioned one,
 she is free to choose.

14 Lovely one, you will certainly
not be violating dharma,
How can I be guilty of adharma,
who seeks the welfare of all?

15 O beautiful complexioned one!
Human nature is such that men and women
are physically attracted to each other.
The contrary is unnatural.

16 Even after intercourse with me,
you will remain a virgin.
You will have a mahā-muscled
mahā-illustrious son."

17 "Dispeller of all darkness," said Kuntī,
"if I have your son,
let him have flesh-armour
and flesh-ear-rings,
let him be brave and mahā-muscled
and mahā-powerful."

18 "Your son, gentle one," said Sūrya,
"will be mahā-muscled,
he will be born with *amṛta*-made ear-rings
and *amṛta*-made armour."

19 "If both the splendid armour and ear-rings
of the son you will have by me
will be made of *amṛta*,"
said Kuntī,

20 "Then have intercourse with me,
as you have desired, *bhagavan*, revered one.
May he be strong, handsome, energetic
and dharma-firm like you."

21 "Rānī, gentle, passion-radiant girl," said Sūrya,
"I will give him the ear-rings
which Aditi presented me,
and this armour."

22 "*Bhagavan*, Gopatī, O lord of light,"
Kuntī replied, "if my son
will be as you have described,
then enjoy me!"

23 "Very well," said Sūrya,
the sky-travelling foe of Svarbhānu-Rāhu.
With his yogic ātman, he entered Kuntī;
he touched her navel.

24 Thrilled by the energy of the sun,
devī Kuntī
collapsed as if bewildered
on her bed.

25 "Lovely-thighed *kanyā*," said Sūrya,
"I will now leave you.
Your son will be the greatest weapons-expert.
You will remain a virgin."

26 O Indra-among-rājās Janamejaya!
The young girl gazed shyly
at richly radiant Sūrya and said,
"So may it be."

27 Kuntirājā's daughter
asked for a son
shyly from Sūrya,
and sprawled, limp,
like a torn creeper,
on her auspicious bed.

28 The hot-rayed deity
enchanted her
and penetrated her
by means of his yoga,
but did not defile her.
Then she recovered.

SECTION THREE HUNDRED EIGHT

1 O lord of the earth (said Vaiśampāyana)
like the star-lording moon in the sky,
Pṛthā conceived on the first day
of the bright fortnight
of the eleventh month
of the year.

2 The lovely-hipped girl, afraid of scandal
among her relatives and friends,
concealed her pregnancy,
so that no one really guessed.

3 None except a nurse
knew about her condition,
because Kuntī cleverly stayed within the seclusion
of the female apartments.

4 In course of time
the exquisite complexioned unmarried girl
gave birth to Sūrya's son –
a boy who was god-like.

5 Like his father he wore natural armour,
he had flaming gold ear-rings,
leonine eyes,
and bull-like shoulders.

6 As soon as he was born,
lovely Kuntī, with the nurse's help,
placed the baby
in a comfortable wicker-work basket,

7 Well-made, smooth,
and swaddled the baby in bees-wax.
Weeping,
she floated it down the Aśva.

8 O rājā Janamejaya, she knew it was improper
for an unmarried girl to be a mother,
but she loved the baby,
and she wept bitterly.

9 Listen to the words which Kuntī spoke,
even as she wept,
and floated the basket
down the Aśva river.

10 "Son,
My little one,
May the beings of the sky protect you,
And the beings of earth
And the celestial regions,
May the beings of water protect you.

11 May the paths you tread be holy!
May no one obstruct you.

12 May rājā Varuṇa the lord of waters
protect you!
May Pavana, god of wind,
Sky-encompassing, everywhere-wandering,
protect you!

13 Son,
May your incomparable heat-dispensing father,
Who gave you to me by divine decree of fate,
Protect you wherever you are.

14 May the Ādityas
Vasus
Rudras
Sādhyas
Viśvadevas
Maruts
And the points of the universe
presided by Indra
May their guardians
protect you!

15 May the gods protect you
wherever you may be.
Even if you are in a foreign land,
I will know you by your armour.

16 My son! Fortunate is your father,
The lord of effulgence, Bhānu-Vibhāvasu,
Who sees you today with divine eyes
As you float down the river.

17 Son of a god! Devaja!
Fortunate is the lady
Who will take you as son
And feed you the milk of her breasts.

18 How lovely a dream for her –
To have a sun-dazzling son,
Clad in armour,
Resplendent with ear-rings,

19 With eyes as large as lotuses,
And skin as lustrous as copper-coloured lotus-leaves,
With a handsome forehead
And magnificent hair – a son like you!

20 Fortunate are they too, my son,
Who will see you crawling on the ground,
Covered with dust, and babbling sweet baby talk.

21 Fortunate they
Who will see you grow into manhood
Like a thick-maned lion of the Himālayas."

22 O rājā, Pṛthā-Kuntī finished,
she wept loudly and bitterly;
and then she floated the basket
down the Aśva river.

23 Her nurse was at her side, O rājā.
Lotus-eyed Pṛthā-Kuntī,
gazing again and again at her son,
longingly, weeping, at night,

24 Floated the basket on the water,
and slipped sorrow-laden
inside the palace,
lest her father find out.

25 The basket floated down the Aśva
into the Carmaṇvatī river,
from there to the Yamunā,
then to the Gaṅgā.

26 Bobbing on the waters of the Gaṅgā,
the basket with the body
arrived near the city of Campā
in the Sūta kingdom.

27 The child survived
because of the *amṛta*-drenched armour
and ear-rings –
and because fate had decreed it so.

SECTION THREE HUNDRED-NINE

1 Around this time (continued Vaiśampāyana)
the Sūta Adhiratha,
a loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
came with his wife to the Jāhnavī-Gaṅgā.

2 His wife's name was Rādhā,
a lady of unrivalled beauty, O rājā.
This mahā-fortune-favoured lady, however,
had no son,

3 Though she had tried all means
to have one.
She saw the basket
drifting down the river,

4 Securely wrapped against danger,
and dyed bright saffron.
It rushed past her down the waves
of the Gaṅgā.

5 Curiosity moved her, and lovely Rādhā
ordered it brought before her.
This was done, and she reported it
to Adhiratha.

6 Adiratha placed the basket on the river bank
and forced it open.
Inside it he saw the baby
(said Vaiśampāyana),

7 Glowing like the rising sun,
with golden flesh-armour,
its pretty face set off
by the dazzle of the ear-rings.

8 The eyes of the charioteer and his wife
widened in wonder;
taking the baby in his lap,
he said to her:

9 "Lovely wife, I have not seen such a marvel
since my birth.
This baby, dear wife,
must be a god's son,

10 And because I have no son,
the gods have sent him to me."
With these words,
he handed the child to his wife Rādhā.

11 Rādhā adopted that divine-wombed boy
who was handsome like a god,
who was graceful and lustrous
like a lotus.
Destiny ordained that milk should swell
Rādhā's breasts.

12 She brought him up in the required manner;
the child grew to boyhood.
Adiratha had other sons
during this time.

13 Because the boy had golden flesh-armour
and golden flesh-ear-rings,
the twice-born called him Vasuṣeṇa,
the "Golden One".

14 So that boy of incalculable strength
and valour
became the charioteer's son Vasuṣeṇa,
also called Vṛṣa.

15 The armour-skinned boy,
the heroic eldest son of the charioteer,
grew up in Aṅga – and Pṛthā-Kuntī knew this,
through her informers.

16 When the charioteer saw that his son
had come of age,
he decided to send him
to the capital Hastināpura.

17 There the brave boy studied under Droṇa
to learn weapons-lore;
there he became friends
with Duryodhana.

18 From Droṇa, Kṛpa, and Paraśurāma,
he learnt the use
of the fourfold weapons;
he became an unrivalled world-famed bowman.

19 His friendship with Duryodhana
made him antagonistic to the Pāṇḍavas;
he sought a duel
with mahā-ātmaned Phālguna-Arjuna.

20 O lord of the world! The very first time
they laid eyes on each other,
Karṇa challenged Arjuna,
and Arjuna Karṇa.

21 Mahārāja, Sūrya of course was aware
that Karṇa, his son by Kuntī,
was growing to manhood
among the Sūtas.

22 It hurt Yudhiṣṭhira to think
that Karṇa's gold armour and ear-rings
made him invincible
on the battlefield.

23 O Indra-among-rājās!
When at noon Karṇa did *añjali*
after his bath before the ray-rich sun,
the creator of daylight,

24 Brahmins used to come
and ask him for wealth.
There was nothing he did not give then
to the twice-born.

25 That is why Indra came to him
disguised as a Brahmin
and begged, "Alms!"
Rādhā's son said, "Welcome, O Brahmin!"

SECTION THREE HUNDRED TEN

1 Seeing the rājā of the gods Indra
disguised as a Brahmin,
Karṇa said, "Welcome, O Brahmin!",
but could not divine his purpose

2 Adhiratha's son said to the Brahmin,
"What is your desire –
passionate girls wearing golden necklaces
or villages full of cows?"

3 "Neither passionate girls with golden necklaces,"
said the Brahmin,
"nor other pleasurable things.
Give these to those who need them.

4 O faultless one, if your vow is indeed
a firm one,
cut off your armour and ear-rings
and give them to me.

5 O foe-frustrater, give these to me soon,
for I think
there is nothing more gainful to me
than this one gift."

6 "Brahmin," said Karṇa,
"I will give you land,
and girls and cows,
and fields to feed you for many years.
But I cannot give you
my skin-armour and ear-rings."

7 O excellent Bharata (continued Vaiśampāyana),
no matter how hard Karṇa pleaded,
the Brahmin would accept
no other gift.

8 Karṇa offered pūjā-respect to the Brahmin,
he pleaded persuasively,
but that excellent twice-born one wanted
no other gift.

9 Finding that the illustrious Brahmin
was adamant
and sought nothing else
but his golden armour
and golden ear-rings,
Rādheya-Karṇa smiled and said:

10 "Brahmin, I was born with this skin-armour
and ear-rings, sprung from *amṛta.*
They make me indestructible.
I cannot give them.

11 O bull-brave Brahmin,
be gracious and take from me
the world's greatest empire,
shorn of its troubling thorns.

12 Without my birth-gifted armour
and two ear-rings,
I will be easy victim to my enemies,
O finest of the twice-born."

13 But Bhagavān Indra, the chastiser of Pāka,
wanted nothing else;
so Karṇa smiled, and said to him again
these words:

14 "Lord, god of gods, I knew you would come.
Śakra-Indra,
what is the point in my bestowing
this gift on you?

15 You are the god of gods.
You should bestow a boon on me.
You are the lord,
you are the creator of creators.

16 If I give you my armour and my ear-rings,
O divine one,
I will get slain in battle –
and the shame will be yours, O Śakra-Indra.

17 Therefore, Śakra-Indra, by all means
take my splendid armour and ear-rings,
but in fair exchange.
Otherwise, not."

18 "The Sun must have known
I was coming to you,"
replied Śakra-Indra.
"I am sure that he has instructed you.

19 *Tāta!* Child!
Karṇa, let it be then as you desire.
What would you like from me –
anything except my thunderbolt?"

20 Karṇa joyfully accepted the offer
of Vāsava-Indra.
Eager to obtain an infalliable *śakti*-missile,
he satisfiedly said:

21 "Take my armour and ear-rings, Vāsava-Indra,
and give me an infalliable *śakti*
that will obliterate all enemies
ranged in battle-formation."

22 O earth-protector! Vāsava-Indra reflected briefly,
pondering the demand
for an infallible missile;
then he replied to Karṇa:

23 "Let me have the skin-armour
and the ear-rings,
and you can have the *śakti*-missile
on one condition:

24 This absolute missile,
which I use to kill Daitya-anti-gods,
slays hundreds of enemies
and returns to my hand;

25 When hurled by you, however,
it will slaughter
any one fiery and roaring foe,
and return to me."

26 Karṇa said, "It is my desire
to slaughter in a mahā-battle
only one fiery and roaring foe
whom even I fear."

27 Indra repeated,
"You will kill one roaring enemy in battle.
The man you intend to kill
is protected by a mahātmā.

28 He is sheltered by Krishna.
Those who know the Vedas
call Krishna the Invincible Boar,
the Unimaginable Nārāyaṇa."

29 "That he may be," said Karṇa.
"*Bhagavan*! Revered one! Give me this *śakti*
that will infallibly empower me
to kill one hero.

30 Here, I slice off my armour and ear-rings.
They are yours.
Only do not let my wounded limbs
look deformed."

31 "Karṇa," said Indra,
"you have kept the truth;
so you will not look disfigured,
there will be no scars.

32 O finest of speakers, Karṇa,
you will once again
possess the glorious dazzle and energy
of your father.

33 Before you fire this missile,
make sure your life
is fatally threatened;
make sure you have
no other weapons on you;
otherwise, it will turn on you."

34 "Śakra-Indra, I promise you," said Karṇa,
"I will hurl
the Vāsavi-weapon rightly,
only when my life is threatened."

35 O lord of the world! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Karṇa took the fiery missile
and began hacking off his flesh
with a sword.

36 The gods and anti-gods
and mortals, seeing Karṇa
mutilating his body,
roared like lions.
Not a twinge of pain
showed on his face.

37 While Karṇa the hero
was smiling and slicing
his birth-gifted armour,
dundubhi-drums sounded,
and divine flowers fell
from the sky on his head.

38 Holding the blood-
dripping armour, he handed it
to Vāsava-Indra,
along with his ear-rings.
And this is the reason
he is Karṇa the "Cutter".

39 Thus Śakra-Indra
deceived and exalted
the great hero Karṇa,
thinking to help
the Pāṇḍavas; and then
he returned to heaven.

40 Hearing of Karṇa's
deception, the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra considered
their pride demeaned.
The Pāṇḍavas rejoiced
at the duping of Karṇa.

41 "Where were the Pāṇḍavas heroes
when this happened, *bhagavān*?
Who gave them the news?"
Janamejaya asked.
"Tell me of their deeds
after twelve years' exile.

42 Mārkaṇḍeya told them all
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
along with tales
of ṛṣis and gods,
after Draupadī's rescue
from Jayadratha in Kāmyaka.

43 The rest of their exile
was spent in the forest
of Dvaitavana,
with Brahmins and followers,
chariots and charioteers,
and cooks and cattle.

SECTION THREE HUNDRED ELEVEN

1 "How the Pāṇḍavas must have suffered
when their wife Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī was abducted!"
exclaimed Janamejaya.
"What happened after her rescue?"

2 Deeply disturbed by the abduction
of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers left Kāmyaka
(continued Vaiśampāyana),

3 And went to the entrancing forest
of Dvaita,
abundant in delicious roots, fruits
and lovely trees.

4 The Pāṇḍavas and their wife Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
lived there,
all engaged in their austerities,
subsisting frugally on fruits.

5 So Kuntī's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bhīma, Arjuna,
and the two other Pāṇḍavas, the sons of Mādrī,
stayed in Dvaita;

6 And, on account of a Brahmin,
these great foe-chastising strict-vowel dharmatmās
experienced a sorrow
that led however to joy.

7 Let me tell you of the agonising experience
these exalted Kauravas
had to pass through
before it brought them joy.

8 One day, it so happened
that a tapasyā-practising Brahmin's drilling rod
and two fire-sticks got entangled
in the horns of a deer.

9 O rājā! That mahā-swift beast
bounded off in looping leaps
a great distance
from the āshram.

10 O most excellent Kaurava,
the Brahmin saw his articles disappear
and, eager to continue the sacred *agnihotṛ* fire,
rushed to where

11 Foe-less Ajātaśatru Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers
were relaxing in the forest,
and said to them
in plaintive tones:

12 "I hung my fire-sticks and drilling-rod
on a tree,
and a wild deer happened to come
and rub against them.

13 O rājā! He bounded away with huge leaps
far from the āshram,
taking with him
my precious articles.

14 O rājā, O Pāṇḍavas,
I beg you to track the beast down,
and restore the articles which I need
for the sacred *agnihotṛ* fire."

15 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
heard the Brahmin's complaint,
and, stirred, he marched out, bow in hand,
with his brothers.

16 To help the Brahmin, the bulls-among-men
Pāṇḍavas immediately put on armour
and, carrying their bows,
gave hot pursuit.

17 Catching up with the animal,
the mahā-chariot-heroes flung *karṇi*-darts,
threw-*nāli*-javelins, and fired *nārāca*-arrows,
but missed.

18 Even as they were closing in,
the mahā-deer disappeared.
Disconsolate, the determined heroes were overcome
by fatigue.

19 Hungry and thirsty and tired,
the frustrated Pāṇḍavas came
to a banyan in the forest
and rested under its cool shade.

20 While they were resting,
irritated and impatient Nakula
said to his eldest brother,
the finest of the Kaurava descendants:

21 "We have never been lazy
in dharma and *artha*,
we have never refused
to help any creature.
Why is it, O rājā,
that we are now baffled?"

SECTION THREE HUNDRED TWELVE

1 "Who knows how adversity comes, or grows,
or its cause," answered Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Dharma dispenses both
merit and defect."

2 Bhīma said, "We have been baffled
because I failed to kill Prātikāmin
when he dragged Draupadī
inside the sabhā."

3 Arjuna said, "We have been baffled
because I tolerated
the sharp, vicious, bone-smarting insults
of the charioteer's son Karṇa."

4 Sahadeva said, "We have been baffled
because I failed to kill Śakuni
when he defeated you
in the dice-game."

5 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira said to Nakula,
"Son of Mādri,
climb up this tree and survey
the ten points.

6 Your brothers are tired and thirsty,
Tātā! Dear brother!
See if there are any signs of water
or water-storing trees nearby."

7 Nakula did as asked.
He climbed the tree and,
surveying the area,
said to his eldest brother:

8 "O rājā! I can see clusters of trees
and I can hear
the cries of *sārasa*-cranes.
There must be water very near here."

9 Kuntī's son, firm-in-truth Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"Good brother,
hurry there, and fetch us water
in the quivers."

10 Instructed by his elder brother,
Nakula promptly
hurried to the spot where he thought
there was water.

11 He was about to drink
from the crane-ringed clear water,
when he heard
a sky-voice speak.

12 *"Tāta!* Child," said the yakṣa. "No! Don't even dare!
I was here first.
Son of Mādrī, answer my questions first,
then drink, and take what you will."

13 Nakula was parched;
he ignored the words and drank the cool water.
No sooner had he sipped
than he fell down dead.

14 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira wondered
why Nakula was delaying.
He said to his heroic,
foe-tormenting brother Sahadeva:

15 "Sahadeva, our brother who was born
moments before you
has been gone long,
Go, find him, and bring water."

16 Sahadeva proceeded in the same direction
and came to the same spot;
he saw his brother Nakula
lying dead on the ground.

17 Anguish over his brother's death afflicted him;
and thirst oppressed him.
He stooped to drink,
and heard these words:

18 "*Tāta*! Child! No! Don't you dare! I was here first.
Answer my questions first,
then drink your fill,
and take what you will."

19 Sahadeva was parched;
he ignored the words,
and began drinking the cool water,
and fell down dead.

20 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira said to Vijaya-Arjuna;
"Destroyer of foes,
your brothers have been gone long,
O dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna.

21 Go, find them, and bring back water.
May you succeed!
You have always been of help to us
in a crisis.

22 Intelligent, sleep-conquering Guḍākeśa-Arjuna.
took his bow, arrows,
and unsheathed sword,
and went to the lake.

23 White-horse-vehicled, Śvetavāhana-Arjuna
arrived at the lake,
and found his two water-seeking brothers,
tigers-among-men, dead on the ground.

24 Seeing them stretched as if asleep,
lion-among-men Arjuna was pained;
the son of Kuntī lifted his bow
and looked around him.

25 Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna could see nothing
in that dense mahā-forest.
Parched with thirst,
he stooped to drink the water.

26 As he did so,
he heard the sky-voice speak:
"Why this hurry to drink?
You cannot without my permission.

27 Kuntī's son, Bharata,
answer first my questions;
then you may drink your fill,
and take what you will."

28 Prevented, Pārtha-Arjuna shouted:
"Face me, and stop me!
Dare to order me when my arrows
have shredded you!"

29 Pārtha-Arjuna demonstrated his ability
to hit an invisible object by sound,
and shrouded the sky
with mantra-charged arrows.

30 O bull-brave Bharata, Janamejaya,
thirst afflicted him, but he continued
to shoot darts, javelins, and *nārāca*-arrows
and infallible missiles.

31 He riddled the sky with a shower of arrows.
The yakṣa sky-voice said:
"All useless, Pārtha-Arjuna.
First answer, then drink.

32 If you drink before answering,
you will die."
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son, ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
heard this; but Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

33 Refused to abide by the command.
He drank, and fell down dead.
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
said to Bhīma:

34 "O Bharata-Bhīma, frustrater of foes!
Nakula, Sahadeva
and dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
went long ago and have not yet returned.

35 Go, find and bring them,
along with the water.
May you succeed!"
Bhīma went to the lake

36 Beside which his tigers-among-men brothers
lay dead.
He was depressed by the sight but,
greatly thirsty,

37 Mahā-muscled Bhīma said to himself;
Must be the work
of some rākṣasa or yakṣa,
And: *I will have to fight today,*

38 *So let me first refresh myself.*
The wolf-waisted son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
bull-brave Vṛkodara-Bhīma
hurried to the water,

39 But the yakṣa said, "*Tāta!* Child No! Don't you dare!
I was here first, son of Kunti.
Answer my questions; then drink your fill,
and take what you will."

40 Bhīma heard the yakṣa of limitless energy
but, instead of answering his question,
drank,
and fell down dead.

41 The rājā son of Kuntī,
bull-brave mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira
was consumed with anxiety;
he pondered, then he stood up,

42 And went towards that secluded part
of the mahā-forest
where no human voice was heard.
Only *ruru*-deer, boar, birds,

43 Only blue-bright trees,
only the humming and droning of bees,
and the chirping of feathered creatures.
The mahā-renowned,

44 Śrīman Yudhiṣṭhira entered
and came to the golden-flowering lake,
which looked as if World-Artificer Viśvakarman
had fashioned it;

45 In and around it were clusters of lotuses,
sindhuvāra flowers,
and cane-clumps, *ketakas, karaviras,*
and many *pippalas.*

46 Eager to catch a glinspse of his brothers,
the son of Dharma, Śrīmān Yudhiṣṭhira,
faint with fatigue, came to the lake,
and gazed awe-struck.

SECTION THREE HUNDRED THIRTEEN

1 Yudhiṣṭhira saw his Indra-like brothers
dead on the ground,
like the four world-guarding Lokapālas
fallen at the end of a yuga.

2 Seeing Arjuna dead,
his bow and arrows scattered,
and Bhīma and the twins
sprawled inert and lifeless,

3 Yudhiṣṭhira gave out a long hot sigh;
tears of sorrow bathed his face.
Grieving
for his dead brothers,

4 The mahā-muscled son of Dharma
broke into a protestation of sorrow,
saying, "Vṛkodara wolf-waisted Bhīma,
you promised,

5 'My mace will smash the thigh of Suyodhana-
Duryodhana on the battlefield.'
All empty words to me,
because now you are dead!

6 O mahā-ātmaned and mahā-muscled enchancer
of Kaurava splendour,
human promises
may be frustrated,

7 But how can celestial vows such as yours
also prove futile?
Dhanañjaya Arjuna,
at your birth the gods said:

8 'Kuntī, this son of yours will be the equal
of the thousand-eyed god Indra.'
And on the northern Pāriyātra mountain
all the creatures sang,

9 'This one will restore all the glory
our enemies have snatched from us.
Himself invincible,
he will conquer all.'

10 How can it be that mahā-powerful Jiṣṇu-Arjuna
is dead?
Why is Dhanañjaya-Arjuna lifeless on the ground,
ruining my hopes,

11 After we have depended on him
for so long?
O why have the furious-in-battle
foe-annihiliting heroes been routed –

12 Kuntī's mahā-muscled sons,
Bhīma and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
conquerors of their foes,
heroes whom no weapons could harm?

13 This wicked heart of mine
must be made of stone –
why does it not burst
seeing the twins lying dead?

14 O bull-brave men, learned in the śāstras,
strong in tapasyā,
wise in the ways of time and place and tradition,
performers of rituals, why are you untimely dead?

15 O unvanquished ones, why do you lie
coupling feelinglessly with the earth,
your bodies unwounded,
your bows unhandled?"

16 Mahā-minded Yudhiṣṭhira
seeing his brothers serenely sleeping
like toppled peaks of mountains,
broke into sweating grief.

17 The dharmatma lord of men said,
"It had to be,"
and, drowned in sorrow's sea,
speculated on how they died.

18 Mahā-minded, mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira,
though he had knowledge
of the mystery of time and place,
could find no answer.

19 The tapasyā-performing dharmātmā
son of Dharma, Yudhiṣṭhira
tried to calm
his agitated mind,

20 And began to use his powers
of fine reasoning
to discover who could have killed
these heroes.

21 *There are no signs of violence*
on their bodies,
no footprints anywhere,
The killer must be a supernatural being.

22 *Let me reason this out carefully;*
but first I must quench my thirst.
Could it be
that Duryodhana, secretly,

23 *Deviously, has conspired*
with the rājā of Gāndhāra, Śakuni,
to pollute this pool?
Deed and misdeed to him are the same.

24 *Which hero can trust*
that perpetually scheming wicked scoundrel?
He may have had secret agents
do this for him.

25 Mahā-intelligent Yudhiṣṭhira
argued on these lines,
but he ruled out the possibility
of a poisoned pool,

26 Because the faces of his dead brothers
were undistorted.
He thought: *They have serene expressions*
on their faces.

27 *Each of my incomparable brothers had the strength*
of a river in flood.
Who else but Kāla-Antaka, the Spirit of Cosmic Time,
could have taken them?

28 Convincing himself that that was the cause
of their deaths,
he scooped up the water.
The sky-voice said:

29 "I am a moss-
and fish-eating crane.
I have transformed
your brothers into spirits.
Answer my questions, prince,
or be the fifth victim.

30 *Tāta!* Child! No! I was here first. Don't you dare!
First, you must answer my questions;
then drink your fill,
and take what you will."

31 "What kind of excelling god are you?"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Rudra, Vasu or Marut?
No bird could have done this.

32 Who has smashed
these four formidable mountains,
my brothers –
Himavat, Pāriyātra, Vindhya, and Malaya?

33 O strongest of the strong!
Your feat is mahā-remarkable,
for neither gods, anti-gods, gandharvas,
nor rākṣasas

34 Could defeat my brothers in battle.
A maha-splendid feat!
But why? What do you want?
I do not know.

35 I am afraid, yet I am mahā-curious to know,
My head is aching,
and my heart is filled
with apprehension.

36 *Bhagavan*, revered one, who are you?
Why are you here?"
"I am a yakṣa, not a water-bird.
May you prosper!

37 I am the one responsible
for your mahā-radiant brothers' deaths."
Yudhiṣṭhira heard these chilling words
of the yakṣa,

38 And crept up to him
while he was speaking.
O rājā! He had a massive, palm-tall body,
grotesque eyes,

39 He seemed to burn like the fire of the sun.
Bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira
saw him as a huge hill;
he was perched on a tree,

40 And cloud-rumbling growls issued
from his throat.
"I warned your brothers
again and again, O rājā," he said,

41 "But they wanted the water on their terms.
So I killed them.
He who loves his life
should not drink this water, O rājā.

42 Don't even try, son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
I rule this pool.
Answer my question; then drink your fill,
and take what you will."

43 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "Yakṣa!
I have no desire
to take what is yours.
Good men have never recommended

44 That a person praise himself,
O bull-brave one!
But I will answer as best as I can.
Ask."

45 The yakṣa asked:
"What makes the sun rise?
Who keeps him company?
Who causes him to set?
How is he firm?"

46 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Brahmā makes the sun rise.
The gods keep him company,
Dharma makes him set.
He is firm in truth."

47 The yakṣa asked:
"What makes one scholarly?
What makes one exalted?
How does one find a companion?
O rājā! How does one become wise?"

48 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Śruti, revealed truth makes one scholarly,
Tapasyā makes one exalted.
Patience is the best companion.
Serving elders makes one wise."

49 The yakṣa asked:
"What makes Brahmins god-like?
What dharma of theirs do good men have?
What is their human attribute?
What makes them ignoble?

50 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Study of the Vedas makes them god-like.
Tapasyā makes them good men.
Mortality is their human attribute.
Slander makes them ignoble."

51 The yakṣa asked:
"What makes Kṣatriyas god-like?
What dharma of theirs do good men have?
What is their human attribute?
What do they have that ignoble men have?"

52 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Bow craft and arms-skill make them god-like.
Yajñas make them good men,
Fear is their human attribute.
Abandoning the distressed makes them ignoble."

53 The yakṣa asked:
"What makes the chant of a yajña?
What makes the *yaju* of a yajña?
What makes the refuge of a yajña?
What is that without which there is no yajña?"

54 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"*Prāṇa*-breath is the chant of a yajña.
Mind is the *yaju* a yajña.
Ṛg is the refuge of a yajña.
Without it there is no yajña."

55 The yakṣa asked:
"What is of the greatest value to cultivators?
What is of the greatest value to sowers?
What is of the greatest value to prosperity-seekers?
What is of the greatest value to begetters?,"

56 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Rain is supreme to cultivators.
Seeds are supreme to sowers.
Cattle are supreme to prosperity-seekers.
Sons are supreme to begetters."

57 The yakṣa asked:
"Is there a man who has intelligence,
Given pūjā-respect by the world,
Respected by all creatures,
Enjoying sense-pleasures,
Who breathes and yet is not alive?"

58 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"The person who does not gratify
Gods, guests, servants, *pitṛs*, and his atman,-
These five –
Breathes but is not alive."

59 The yakṣa asked:
"What is solider than earth?
What is higher than sky?
What is swifter than wind?
More prolific than grass?"

60 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"The mother is solider than earth.
The father is higher than sky.
Mind is fleeter than wind.
Thoughts more prolific than grass."

61 The yakṣa asked:
"What does not close its eyes when asleep?
What does not move after birth?
What has no heart?
What swells by its own force?"

62 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Fish do not close their eyes when asleep.
An egg does not move after birth.
A stone has no heart,
A stream swells by its own force."

63 The yakṣa asked:
"Who is the friend of a traveller?
Who is the friend of a householder?
Who is the friend of a sick man?
Who is the friend of a dying man?"

64 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"The friend of a traveller is his road companion.
The friend of a householder is his wife.
The friend of a sick man is his doctor.
The friend of a dying man is charity."

65 The yakṣa asked:
"Who is the guest of all creatures?
What is Sanātana Dharma?
O Indra-among-rājās, what is *amṛta*?
What is this entire universe?"

66 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Agni is the guest of all creatures.
The milk of cows is *amṛta,*
Amrta is *Sanātana* Dharma.
This entire universe is air."

67 The yakṣa asked:
"What moves alone?
What is born again after birth?
What is the remedy against cold?
What is the largest field?"

68 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"The sun moves alone.
The moon takes birth again.
Fire is the remedy against cold.
Earth is the largest field."

69 The yakṣa asked:
"What is the essence of Dharma?
What is the essence of fame?
What is the essence of heaven?
What is the essence of happiness?"

70 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"The essence of Dharma is *dākṣya*-ability.
The essence of fame is *dāna*-charity,
The essence of heaven is *satya*-truth.
The essence of happiness is *śīla*-gentleness.

71 The yakṣa asked:
"What is a man's ātman?
Who is his destiny-chosen friend?
What is his main support?
What is his supreme refuge?"

72 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"A man's son is his ātman.
His wife is his destiny-chosen loved-and-loving *sakhā* friend.
Rain clouds are his main support.
Charity is his supreme refuge."

73 The yakṣa asked:
"What is most worthy of praise?
What is the best wealth?
What is the greatest gift?
What is the finest happiness?"

74 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Skill is most worthy of praise.
Sacred knowledge is the best wealth.
Health is the greatest gift.
Contentment is the greatest happiness."

75 The yakṣa asked:
"What is the greatest dharma in the world?
What dharma is always fruitful?
Controlling what means freedom from sorrow?
With whom is friendship never wasted"

76 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Refraining from violence is the greatest dharma.
The dharma of the three Vedas is always fruitful.
The controlled mind means freedom from sorrow.
Friendship with good men is never wasted."

77 The yakṣa asked:
"Renunciation of what
makes a man loved?
Renunciation of what
brings freedom from sorrow?
Renunciation of what
makes a man wealthy?
Renunciation of what
makes a man happy?"

78 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Renunciation of pride
makes a man loved.
Renunciation of anger
brings freedom from sorrow.
Renunciation of lust
makes a man wealthy.
Renunciation of greed
makes a man happy."

79 The yakṣa asked:
"Why does one give to Brahmins?
Why does one give to actors and dancers?
Why does one give to servants?
Why does one give to rājās?"

80 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"One gives to Brahmins out of dharma.
One gives to actors and dancers to be praised.
One gives to servants that they may live.
One gives to rājās out of fear."

81 The yakṣa asked:
"What envelops the world?
What prevents self-discovery?
Why are friends forsaken?
What blocks entry into heaven?"

82 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Ignorance envelops the world.
Tamas-delusion prevents self-discovery.
Friends are forsaken for greed.
Attachment to things blocks entry into heaven."

83 The yakṣa asked:
"When is a man dead?
When does a kingdom die?
When is a *śrāddha* funeral-rite as good as dead?
When is a yajña dead?"

84 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"When a man is poor, he is dead.
A kingdom without a rājā is dead
An ignorant priest means a *śrāddha* dead.
A yajña without *dakṣiṇā*-offerings is dead."

85 The yakṣa asked:
"What is the right direction?
What are water, food, poison?
What is the right time for a *śrāddha*?
Answer; drink your fill and take what you will."

86 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Men of truth are the right direction.
Ākāśa-space is water, cow is food, selfish prayer is poison.
A Brahmin is the right time for a *śrāddha*.
What do you think, O yakṣa?"

87 The yakṣa asked:
"What constitutes tapasyā?
What is discipline?
What is endurance?
What is a sense of shame?"

88 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"To follow sva-dharma is tapasyā.
Restraint of the mind is discipline.
To accept duality, the heat and cold of life, is endurance.
Not doing what should not be done is sense of shame."

89 The yakṣa asked:
"O rājā, what is knowledge?
What is tranquillity?
What is the supreme kindness?
What is simplicity?"

90 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Experience of the Ultimate is knowledge.
Tranquillity is a serene mind.
The supreme kindness is to wish the good of all.
Simplicity is a reposed mind."

91 The yakṣa asked:
"Which enemy of man cannot be conquered?
What is man's persistent frailty?
Which man can be called moral?
And which man is immoral?"

92 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Anger is the unconquered enemy of man.
Greed is his persistent frailty.
That man is moral who seeks the good of all.
That man is immoral who lacks compassion."

93 The yakṣa asked:
"O rājā, what is delusion?
What is pride?
What is laziness?
What is grief?"

94 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Folly in dharma is delusion.
Exaggerated self-importance is pride.
Inaction in dharma is laziness.
Non-knowledge *a-jñāna* is grief."

95 The yakṣa asked:
"What do the ṛṣis call steadiness?
What is known as patience?
What is the supreme ablution?
What is charity?"

96 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Conscience, one's dharma, *sva-dharma,* is steadiness.
Restraining the senses is patience.
Washing the mind clean is the supreme ablution.
Protection of all creatures is charity."

97 The yakṣa asked:
"Who can be called a paṇḍit?
Who is a negative thinker?
Who is the fool?
What is kāma and what is envy?"

98 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"The man who knows dharma is a paṇḍit.
The negative thinkers is a fool
The fool is a negative thinker.
Desiring worldly things is kāma.
Envy is a warped heart."

99 The yakṣa asked:
"What is *ahaṁkāra* self-importance?
What is hypocrisy?
What is the divine favour?
What is vice?"

100 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Self-importance is maha-ignorance.
To pretend to dharma is hypocrisy.
The fruits of charity are divine favour.
Slandering others is vice."

101 The yakṣa asked:
"Dharma, Aṛtha and Kāma clash with each other.
How can these contraries be reconciled?"

102 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"When Dharma and one's wife are in harmony,
Dharma, Artha, and Kāma are reconciled."

103 The yakṣa asked:
"Who gets indestructible hell, O bull-brave Bharata?
Answer this question quickly."

104 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"The man who summons a begging Brahmin
And then refuses him alms, saying, 'No',
Gets indestructible hell.

105 The man who declares as liars
The Vedas, the Dharma-śāstras, the twice-born,
Gods, and the dharma of his ancestors,
Gets indestructible hell.

106 The man who has wealth,
But neither enjoys it nor gives it in charity,
Protesting that he does not have any,
Gets indestructible hell."

107 The yakṣa asked:
"Tell me, O rājā, and tell me truly:
What makes a Brahmin –
Birth, character, education, study of revealed scriptures?"

108 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Yakṣa, child, listen to me. Truly –
It is not birth, it is not education,
and it is not study of the revealed scriptures.
It is character that makes a twice-born Brahmin.

109 A Brahmin should look to his character.
A man whose character is not weak,
is never himself weak.
The man who has no character is lost.

110 Teachers, students and others who study the *śāstras*
are trivial and foolish.
The paṇḍit is he whose actions show character,

111 Even a Śūdra is better
than a man who knows the four Vedas
but lacks character.
The Brahmin is he, who, with controlled senses
performs the *agnihotṛ*-sacrifice."

112 The yakṣa asked:
"The sweet-speaking person –
what does he gain?
The deliberate man?
The man with many friends?
The dharma-keeping man?"

113 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"The sweet-speaking person
is loved by all.
The deliberate man
gains material success.
The man with many friends
leads a happy life.
The dharma-keeping man
gets the Ultimate."

114 The yakṣa asked:
"Who is happy?
What is wonderful?
What is the path?
What is the news?
Answer my four questions – and drink."

115 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"That man is happy who,
Not in debt and not in a foreign land,
In his own home, in the fifth or sixth part of the day,
Cooks a vegetarian meal, and eats it.

116 Every day creatures die. They go to the realm of Yama
Yet everyone thinks he will live for ever.
What is more wonderful than this?

117 Arguments are futile,
revelations conflict,
no single rsi
has the whole truth.
The truth of Dharma
is mysteriously hidden
in the cave of the heart.
What great men have followed,
that is the path,
O yakṣa of the waters.

118 In this massively deluded
cauldron of a world,
where the sun is fire,
and the days and nights
are fuel for that fire,
and the months and seasons
are the ladle of the cauldron,
Kāla cooks creatures.
That is the news."

119 The yakṣa said:
"O foe-tormentor, your answers are perfect.
Tell me: what makes a man man?
What man has all wealth?"

120 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Word of a man's good karma reaches heaven and
earth.
As long as that word lasts,
He remains a man.

121 That man has all wealth
To whom pleasant and unpleasant,
Joy and sorrow, past and future are the same.

122 That man is lord of all wealth
Who, in past, present, and future,
Is an unaffected, serene-minded, self-contented yogi."

123 The yakṣa said:
"You have well described the all-wealthy man, O rājā.
One of your brothers can be restored to life.
Choose which."

124 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Yakṣa, I choose Nakula,
Dark-skinned, pink-eyed, *śāla*-tree-tall,
Broad-chested and long-armed.
Revive him!"

125 The yakṣa said:
"But Bhīma is dear to you,
And Arjuna is your chief support.
Why do you choose Nakula, O rājā,
Who is only your step-brother?

126 Why do you leave out ten-thousand-elephant-strong
Bhīma,
And choose Nakula instead?

127 They say Bhīma is very dear to you.
Why do you prefer the life of your step-brother?

128 Why do you leave out Arjuna,
Whose strength of arms is admired by the Pāṇḍavas,
And choose Nakula?

129 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Dharma, violated, destroys;
Dharma, cherished, protects.
I never violate Dharma,
Because it would then destroy me.

130 Not harming others is the highest dharma –
In my opinion, the ultimate fulfilment.
I am firm in non-injury.
Yakṣa, revive Nakula.

131 People know rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
Is a man of dharma.
I will not swerve from *sva-dharma.*
Yakṣa, revive Nakula.

132 My father had two wives, Kuntī and Mādrī.
I want the sons of both to live.

133 As Kuntī is to me, so is Mādrī.
I make no distinction.
I treat both as equal mothers.
Yakṣa, revive Nakula."

134 The yakṣa said:
"O bull-brave Bharata,
Since you hold non-injury above Artha and Kāma,
May all your brothers return to life!"

SECTION THREE HUNDRED FOURTEEN

1 As soon as the yakṣa said this,
the Pāṇḍavas rose;
their hunger and thirst deserted them
(said Vaiśampāyana).

2 Yudhiṣṭhira asked:
"Who are you, O invincible one,
Who stands on one leg in the water?
Are you a god?
I cannot believe you are a yakṣa.

3 Are you the finest of the Maruts?
Or of the Rudras?
Are you the thunder-wielding lord-of-gods Indra?

4 Each of my brothers can fight a hundred warriors;
I know of no warrior who can defeat them all.

5 They seem to have woken from deep sleep.
Are you a friend of ours? Are you our father?"

6 The yakṣa replied:
"*Tāta!* Child! I am your father,
I am Dharma.
O bull-brave Bharata, O gently valiant one,

7 My limbs are
Fame *yaśa*
Truth *satya*
Discipline *dama*
Purity *śauca*
Simplicity *ārjava*
Modesty *hlī*
Charity *dāna*
Tapasyā *tāpa*
Brahmacarya.

8 One can reach me by these doors:
Ahiṃsā
Impartiality *samatā*
Peace *śanti*
Not harming others *anṛśaṁsya*
Unenviousness *amatsara*
You are dear to me.

9 It is your good fortune that you
Have practised the five virtues:
Calmness of mind, self-control, moderation,
forbearance, yoga.
You have bravely faced the six weaknesses:
Hunger, thirst, sorrow, delusion, decay, and death.
The first two appear in the first stage of life,
The next two in the second stage,
To prepare creatures for the next life.

10 I am Dharma. May you prosper!
I came to test you.
You patient and forbearing nature has pleased me.
O faultless one, I will grant you boons.

11 O Indra-among-rājās, impeccable one,
Ask your boons: I will grant them.
Those who have bhakti for me are never refused."

12 Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"May the *agnihotṛ*-sacrifice of the Brahmin
Whose fire-sticks were carried away by the deer
Not get frustrated. That is my first wish."

13 The yakṣa said:
"Son of Kuntī, it was I, as a deer,
Who carried away the Brahmin's fire-sticks,
In order to test you."

14 The *bhagavān* yakṣa added:
"Your boon is granted.
May you prosper!
You are like a god!
Ask another boon."

15 Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"We have been twelve years in the forest:
The thirteenth year has come.
Grant that no oṇe will be able to recognise us
Wherever we stay during this year."

16 The *bhagavān* said:
"That boon is granted too."
He consoled Kuntī's son with the power of truth,
Saying:

17 “O Bharata descendant!
Even if all of you move about in your own shapes,
No one in the three worlds will recognise you.

18 O enhancers of the glory of the Kauravas!
Through my favour you will live unrecognised
In the city of Virāṭa in the thirteenth year.

19 Any of you will be able to put on
Any disguise that you mentally wish.

20 Give to the Brahmin these fire-sticks which I
As a deer carried away in order to test you.

21 O dignified one, ask another boon.
I will grant it.
O finest-among-men,
I do not tire granting you boons.

22 My son,
Ask a third and unique boon.
You were born from me, O rājā,
And Vidura from a portion of me.”

23 Yudhiṣṭhira said:
“You are the eternal god of gods:
Sanātana deva-deva!
I am honoured to see your real form.
Father, grant me what you will,
And I will gladly accept it.

24 Adorable one,
Grant me strength
To overcome greed, and folly, and anger,
Grant that my mind
Move towards charity, tapasyā, and truth.”

25 “Pāṇḍava,” replied Dharma,
“You were born with these guṇas.
You are Dharma.
But may it be as you have desired.”

26 *Bhagavān* Dharma, the adored of the three worlds,
Said this, and vanished.
The large-minded sons of Pāṇḍu were united
As if after a refreshing sleep.

27 Showing no signs of tiredness,
the heroic Pāṇḍavas
returned to the āshram and gave the fire-sticks
to the Brahmin.

28 The man who recites
this fame-increasing story
of the revived Pāṇḍavas,
of the meeting of father
and son, will attain
control of his passions,
and get blessed with sons
and grandsons, and life
up to one hundred years.

29 The man who embraces
this tale to his heart
will never delight
in doing adharma,
or breaking up friendships,
or stealing possessions,
or sexually enjoying
the wife of another,
or harbouring hatred.

SECTION THREE HUNDRED FIFTEEN

1 Complying with the instructions of Dharma
to pass
the thirteenth year in secret,
the truth-firm Pāṇḍavas,

2 Strict in their vows,
sat near the learned tapasyā-practisers
who, out of bhakti for them,
kept them company in the forest.

3 In order to get permission
from these maha-atmaned, rigid-vowed ascetics,
the Pāṇḍavas did *añjali*
before them, saying:

4 “You know that Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s sons
have cheated us
out of our kingdom,
and heaped many indignities on us.

5 We have painfully passed twelve years
in the forests.
The thirteenth year has to be spent
in secret.

6 Give us permission to do this.
If wicked-ātmaned Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
who has spies,
and scheming Karṇa and Subala’s son Śakuni

7 Discover us, they will harm us,
for they hate us,
and they will harm the citizens, and our friends,
and our relatives too.

8 When will that day ever come when all of us,
with the Brahmins,
will regain and again enjoy possession
of our kingdom?”

9 The pure son of Dharma
sadly said these words;
grief so choked rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
that he wept and fainted.

10 The Brahmins and his brothers
gathered round him to console him.
Dhaumya said gravely
to the king:

11 “Rājā, you are learned,
gentle and truthful,
lord of your feelings.
Men of your nature
should never give in
to fickle misfortune.

12 Even the mahātmā gods,
wandering disguised in many places
to vanquish their enemies,
often suffered reverses.

13 Indra did eventually succeed,
but first he had to live disguised
in Giriprasthāśrama
in Niṣadha.

14 Viṣṇu as the Horse-Necked Deity
lived for long unrecognised
in Aditi's womb
before killing the Daitya anti-gods.

15 You have heard the story
of how Viṣṇu as Dwarf,
in Brahmin-shape,
deprived Bali of his kingdom.

16 You have heard how the fire-deity Hutāśana
plunged into the waters
and, disguising himself,
served the gods.

17 You have heard, O wise-in-dharma one,
how Hari-Viṣṇu,
seeking to punish his foes,
hid himself in Śakra-Indra's thunderbolt.

18 *Tāta*, my child! O faultless one,
you have heard how the Brahma-ṛṣi Aurva
hid in his mother's thighs
to serve the gods.

19 *Tāta*, my child! The radiant sun-god Vivasvata,
concealed in every part of the earth,
completely consumed
all his enemies.

20 Viṣṇu of fearful feats concealed himself
in the palace of Daśaratha
to kill
the ten-necked Daśagrīva-Rāvaṇa.

21 They were the mahātmās who concealed
their identities in various ways
to defeat their foes;
you will do the same."

22 Highly pleased by Dhaumya's advice,
wise-in-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira
recovered his composure by self-confidence
and *śāstra*-wisdom.

23 Mahā-powerful mahā-armed Pāṇḍava-Bhīma,
the bravest of the brave,
pleased rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
with these words:

24 "Mahārāja, the wielder of the Gāṇḍīva, Arjuna,
seeks your permission;
abiding by dharma, he has had no chance
to show his prowess.

25 Tremendously brave Sahadeva and Nakula,
who can wipe out their enemies,
have been restrained
by me.

26 We will never leave undone
whatever you order us.
Decide for us – and we will quickly
conquer our foes."

27 Bhīma finished;
and the Brahmins chanted blessings
on the Pāṇḍavas,
and returned to their dwellings.

28 All the leading ascetics and munis
and other holy men learned in the Vedas,
eager to see the Pāṇḍavas,
chanted blessings too.

29 The five brave and learned Pāṇḍavas,
proficient bow-wielders,
rose and, accompanied by Dhaumya
and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, left.

30 Proceeding about a *kroṣa*-shout from that place,
they sat down
and held a consultation on the best plan
for disguise – these tigers-among-men,

31 All of them proficient in *śāstras*
and mantras and weapons-lore,
knowing when to wage war
and when make peace.

This internationally accepted system of Roman transliteration of the Devanāgari alphabet is followed in this transcreation.

V O W E L S

Guttaral	अ	आ	
	a	ā	
Palatal	इ	ई	
	i	ī	
Labial	उ	ऊ	
	u	ū	
Dental	ऋ		
	ṛ		
Guttaral-Palatal		ए	ऐ
	e	ei	
Guttaral-Labial		ओ	औ
	o	au	

C O N S O N A N T S

Guttaral	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	ह	:
	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	h	ḥ
Palatal	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	य	श
	c	ch	j	jh	ñ	y	ś
Lingual	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	र	ष
	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	r	ṣ
Dental	त	थ	द	ध	न	ल	स
	t	th	d	dh	n	l	s
Labial	प	फ	ब	भ	म	व	
	p	ph	b	bh	m	v	

Anusvara = ṁ

CONTENTS

CANTO III

Āraṇyaka [Vaṇa] Parva

The Book of Exile

vi) *Jantupākhyānaṃ* : Episode of King *Somaka* and *Jantu.*

vii) *Śyenakapotiyaṃ*: Episode of a hawk and a pigeon.

viii) *Aṣṭavakriyaṃ* : Episode of Aṣṭavakra.

ix) *Yavakritopākhyanaṃ* : Episode of *Yavakrīta.*

x) *Saugandhikaharaṇaṃ*: Episode relating to the fetching of the fragrant lotus.

Chapter 34 *Jaṭāsuravadhaparva(n)*: Relating to the slaughter of *Jaṭāsura.* (Chap. 37 in Cal.Ed.). Sec. 154 [Cr. Ed.]; 157 (Cal. Ed.)

Chapter 35 *Yakṣayudhaparva(n)* (Chap. 38 in Cal. Ed.): Relating to the combat with the 'Yakṣas.' Sec. 155-172 [Cr. Ed.]; 158 – 172 [Cr.Ed.]; 158-164 (Cal.Ed.)

Nwātakavacaparva(n) Chap. 39 in Cal.Ed.): Relating to the Nivātakavacas. Sec. 165–175

Chapter 36 *Ājagaraparva(n)* (Chap. 40 in Cal.Ed.): Relating to the meeting between [Nahuṣa in the form of] a huge serpent and Yudhiṣṭhira. Sec. 173-178 [Cr. Ed.]; 176-181 (Cal. Ed.)

Chapter 37 *Mārkaṇḍeyasamāsyāparva(n)* (Chap. 41 in Cal. Ed.): Relating to entertainment of Pāṇḍavas in the company of *Mārkaṇḍeya.* Sec. 179-221 [Cr. Ed.]; 182-232 (Cal. Ed.)

*i) *Matsyopākhyānaṃ*: Episode relating to *Matsya.*

ii) *Maṇḍukopākhyānaṃ*: Episode relating to Maṇḍuka.

iii) *Indradyumnopākhyānaṃ*: Episode of *Indradyumna.*

iv) *Dhundhumāropākhyānaṃ*: Episode relating to the slaughter of *Dhundhu* (*Dānava*).

v) *Pativratopākhyānaṃ* : Episode of the faithful wife.

vi) *Brāhmaṇavyadhasaṁvāda*: The dialogue between a *Brāhmaṇa* and a member of the hunting community.

vii) *Aṅgirasa* : Episode of *Aṅgirasa* (Agni and the birth of Skanda).

viii) *Skandotpatti* : The birth and origin of Skanda.

Skandopākhyānaṃ : Episode of Skanda.

Manuṣyagrahakathana: About the harmful demi-gods.

Skandayuddha : The combat of *Skanda.*
Kārtikeyastava : Hymn to *Kārtikeya* (*Skanda*). [only in Cal. Ed.]

Chapter 38 — *Draupadī Satyabhāmāsaṁvādaparva(in)* [Chap. 42 in Cal. Ed.] Relating to the meeting of *Draupadī* and *Satybhyāmā* in the woods.

Chapter 39 — *Ghoṣayātrapārva(n)* (Chap. 43 in Cal. Ed.): Relating to the expedition of the *Kauravas* to the cattle station. Sec. 225-243 [Cr. Ed.]; 236-257 (Cal.Ed.)

Chapter 40 — *Mṛgasvapnabhayaparva(n)* (Chap. 44 in Cal.Ed.): Relating to the dream of Yudhiṣṭhira prior to his entry into *Dvaitavana.*

Chapter 41 — *Vrihīdrauṇikaparva(n)* (Chap. 45 in Cal. Ed.): Episode of the pot of rice. Sec. 245-247 [Cr.Ed.]; 259-261 (Cal. Ed.)

Chapter 42 — *Draupadīharṇaparva(n)* (Chap. 46 in Cal.Ed.): Relating to the abduction of *Draupadī* by Jayadratha. Sec. 248-283 [Cr.Ed.]; 262-271 (Cal.Ed.)
[*Jayadrathavimokṣaṇaparva(n)* (Chap. 47 in Cal. Ed.) [not found in Cr. Ed.]: Relating to the setting free of *Jayadratha.* Sec. 272 (Cal. Ed.).}

i) *Rāmopākhyānaṃ* (Chap. 48 in Cal. Ed.) Episode of *Rāma Dāśarathi of Ayodhyā.* Sec. 273-299 (Cal.Ed.)

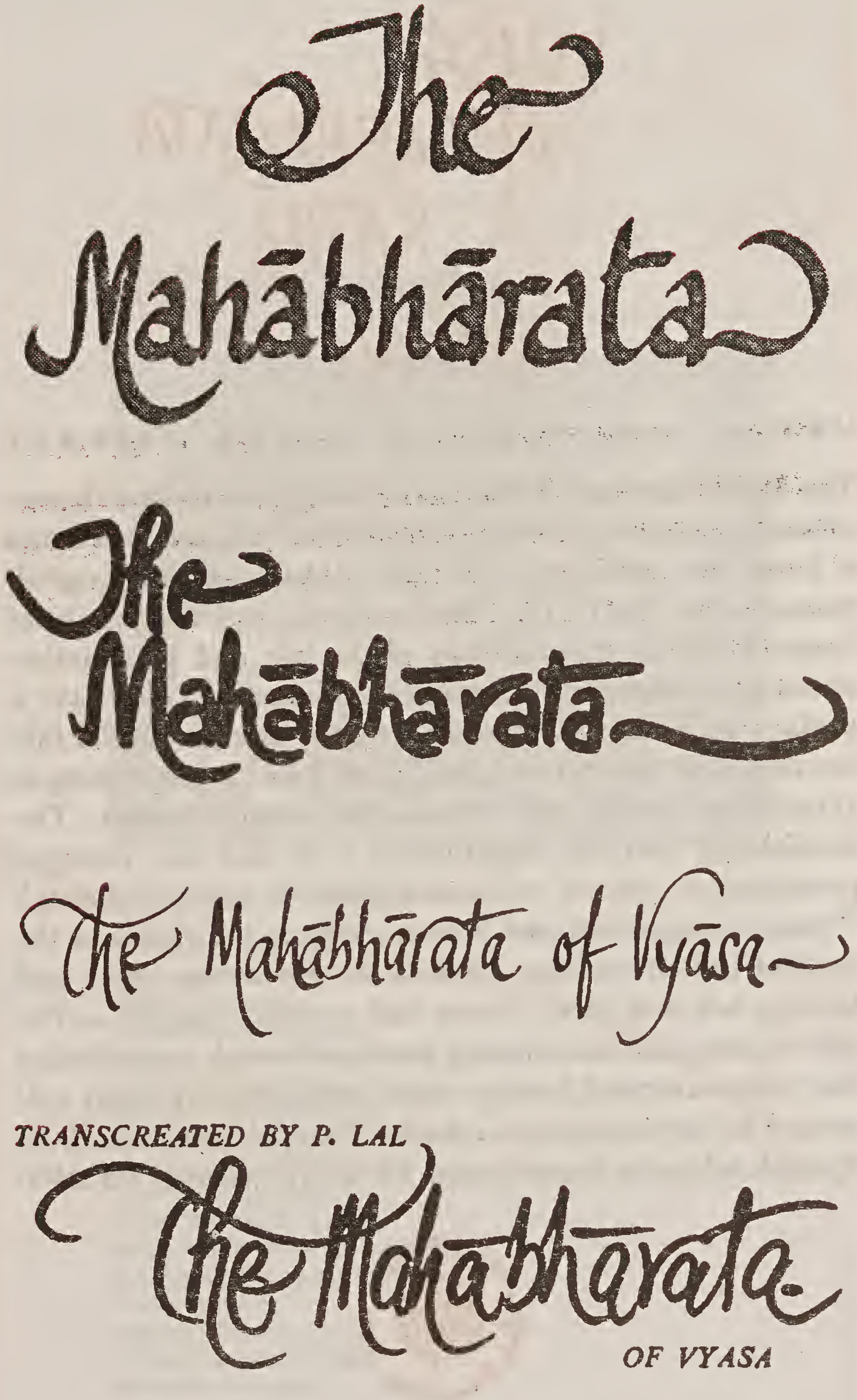
ii) *Sāvitryupākhyānaṃ* [Cr. Ed. only]: Episode of Sāvitrī and Satyavān. {*Pativratāmāhātmyaparva(n)* (only in Cal.Ed.:Chap. 49) Episode of Sāvitrī and Satyavān.} Sec. 293-299 (Cal. Ed.)

Chapter 43 — *Kuṇḍalaharaṇaparva(n)* (Chap. 50 in Cal. Ed.): Relating to the taking away of the earrings of *Karṇa* by Indra in disguise.
Sec. 284-294 [Cr.Ed.]; 300-310 (Cal.Ed.)

Chapter 44 — *Āraṇeyaparva(n)* (Chap. 51 in Cal. Ed.) : Relating to the 'wood for lighting fire by friction', Sec. 295-299 [Cr.Ed.]; 311-315 (Cal. Ed.)

*i) *Yakṣapraśna*: Episode relating to the queries of *Yakṣa.* [only in Cr. Ed.]

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by Madhushaba Dasgupta
(Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 1999)



The evolution of wrap-around title-flaps of P. Lāl's monthly Mahābhārata fascicules of the Sabhā Parva that appeared from WRITERS WORKSHOP in 1969-1970 as hardbound volumes 27-37.

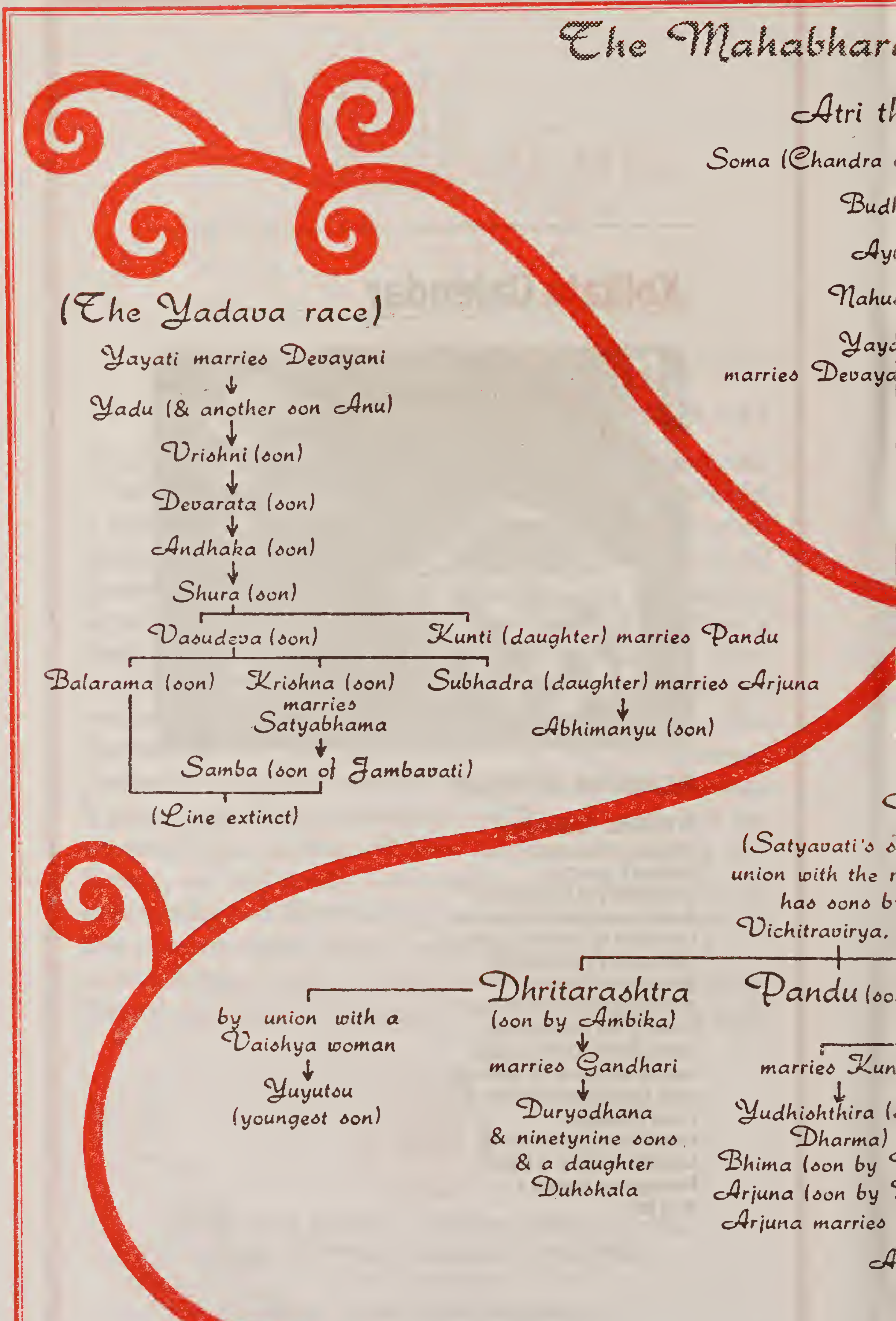
Kolkata Calendar



An Enchanted Space by Ganesh Pyne at CIMA

READING SESSION

G D Birla Sabhagar
Professor P Lal reads Sanjaya's report to Dhritarastra of the death of Kaurava general Drona on the battlefield of Kuruksetra, and Dhritarastra's inconsolable grief and guilt at not preventing the installation of Drona as the Kaurava army leader, in the 310th weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's complete Mahabharata, presented by Sanskriti Sagar at G D Birla Sabhagar on January 8 at 11 am.



Sketch by Srimati Lal

Family Tree

ishi

u) the Moon

i)

harmishtha

(The Paurava & Kaurava race)

Yayati marries Sharmishtha

↓

Puru (& 2 other sons: Druhyu & Turvasu)

↓

Dushyanta (son) marries Shakuntala

↓

Bharata (son)

↓

Hastin (son)

↓

Kuru (son)

↓

Shantanu (son) marries Satyavati

-marriage union with Ganga

↓

3hishma (son)

sa

ier pre-marriage
arashara: Vyasa
so widows of
a & Ambalika)

Chitrangada
(son) (dies childless)

Vichitravirya (son)
marries Ambika & Ambalika
(their eldest sister Amba,
reborn male as Shikhandin,
kills Bhishma in the war)

mbalika)

Vidura (son by
low caste woman)

nd

Madri

↓

Nakula & Sahadeva
(twin sons by Ashvins)



dra

yu (son) marries Uttara

↓

Parikshit (son)

↓

Janamejaya (son)

ॐ The Mahābhārata

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Book 3 : The Vana Parva (2005)
Book 4 : The Virāṭa Parva (2006)
Book 5 : The Udyoga Parva (2006)
Book 6 : The Bhīṣma Parva (2006)
Book 7 : The Droṇa Parva (2006)
Book 8 : The Karṇa Parva (2006)
Book 9 : The Śalya Parva (2006)
Book 10 : The Sauptika Parva (2006)
Book 11 : The Strī Parva (2006)
Book 12 : The Śānti Parva (2007)
Book 13 : The Anuśāsana Parva (2008)
Book 14 : The Aśvamedha Parva (2008)
Book 15 : The Āśramavāsika Parva (2008)
Book 16 : The Mausala Parva (2008)
Book 17 : The Mahāprasthāna Parva (2008)
Book 18 : The Svargārohaṇa Parva (2008)

Appearing from WW in 2006

Prefaces & Notes to Vyāsa's Ādi Parva
Prefaces and Notes to Vyāsa's Sabhā Parva
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Śakuntalā Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yayāti Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Mandapāla Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Draupadī-Svayaṁvara Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Sāvitrī-Satyavān Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Nala-Damayantī Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Śiśupāla-Vadha Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yakṣa-Yudhiṣṭhira Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Rāmāyaṇa Kathā

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated from Sanskrit by P. Lal

On the following pages are facsimile reproductions of pages from different Mahābhārata fascicules (#38-76) of the Vana Parva, showing the Sanskrit notes and extensive revisions and additions by P. Lal. These were prepared for the reading sessions of the transcreation, presented under the auspicious of the Sanskriti Sagar at the G. D. Birla Sabhagar in Kolkata. Started in October 1999, P. Lal has so far (December 2005) read 307 one-hour sessions, followed by question-and-answer periods of up to half an hour. Session 307 ends the Bhīṣma Parva; session 308 begins the Droṇa Parva.

4 You will have to suffer ~~terribly~~ so much
there — the sufferings
of Brahmins can shake even the gods —
and I am only a mortal !
My advice is : Brahmins, go back !
Don't follow us."

5 The Brahmins replied : "~~King~~ Rājā,
we will go where you go.
We are devoted to you, we know
what true dharma is.

6 The gods have compassion on
their ~~devotees,~~ bhaktas,
specially on Brahmins who follow
the path of noble conduct."

7 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "~~Brahmins,~~ Twice-born ones,
I have always ~~honoured~~ had the highest bhakti
for Brahmins ~~highly~~. But our utter
poverty bewilders me.

8 It bewilders my brothers too
who have to go and
gather fruits, roots and venison
from the forest.

9 Draupadi's distress and the
loss of our kingdom
have been too great a burden
for them. Spare them from more."

10 "~~King~~," Lord of the earth," replied the Brahmins,
"do not be anxious.
We will look after ourselves,
but we will go with you.

11 We will chant ~~prayers~~ japa for you
and meditate, and

please you with pleasing talk,
and be pleased ourselves."

12 "Then let it be as you say," एवमेतद् न संदेहो
said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Your company will make me happy,
though my ~~lot's~~ despicable. lot is /

13 How will I endure the sight
of you fending for yourselves ? धिक् पापान्
Surely you don't deserve this ! धृतराष्ट्रजान्
Shame on Dhṛtarāṣṭra's wicked sons !"

14 He sat down and was silent.
A learned Brahmin
named Śaunaka, who knew the truths
of Sāṃkhya and Yoga योगे सांख्ये
and the subtleties of Ādhyātmā, कुशलो
said to the king : अध्यात्मरतो

15 "Every day
thousands of griefs and
thousands of fears दिवसे दिवसे मूढम्
pursue the ignorant. → आविशन्ति न पण्डितम्
The ~~wise~~ learned / are not affected.

16 Learned men like you
are not trapped into fault-filled, बहुदोषेसु कर्मसु
desire ~~sin~~-loaded ~~action~~ karma
opposed to knowledge ज्ञानविरुद्धेषु
and blocking liberation.

17 You have, ~~your majesty~~, O rājā, यम नियम
अष्टाङ्गम् the eight qualities आसन
said by the śrutis and smṛtis प्राणायाम
to ward off evils. प्रत्याहार

18 Poverty doesn't depress you, धारणा
dangers don't dishearten, ध्यान
समाधि

111 Accompanied by their mother,
Followed by Brahmins,
The great foe-chastisers reached Ekacakra.

112 Vyāsa was their counsellor during this journey.
Arriving in Ekacakra, the strict-vowed Pāṇḍavas

113 Killed a man-eating rākṣasa called Baka,
A ferocious creature, as hideous as Hiḍimba.

114 After killing Baka, finest-of-heroes Bhīma
Came to the capital of Drupada.

115 Krishna,
Exactly as you won Bhīṣmaka's daughter Rukmiṇī,
Arjuna won me in the capital.

116 Madhusūdana,
He won me in the svayaṃvara
By accomplishing the almost impossible
And defeating the assembled kings.

117 Krishna,
My griefs are many

ls is not here.

Pāṇḍavas.
ıg,

s ?
cowardly,

120 I was born into a noble family.
My birth was miraculous.
I am the wife of the Pāṇḍavas
And the daughter-in-law of shining Pāṇḍu.

111 Accompanied by their mother,
Followed by Brahmins,
The great foe-chastisers reached Ekacakra.

loving

112 Vyāsa was their counsellor during this journey. प्रियहिते
Arriving in Ekacakra, the strict-vowed Pāṇḍavas रतः

mahā-powerful

113 Killed a man-eating rākṣasa called Baka,
A ferocious creature, as hideous as Hiḍimba.

114 After killing Baka, finest-of-heroes Bhīma प्रहरतां वरः
Came to the capital of Drupada.

115 Krishna,
Exactly as you won Bhīṣmaka's daughter Rukmiṇī,
Ambidextrous Savyasāci Arjuna won me in the capital.

116 Madhusūdana Krishna!
He won me in the svayaṃvara
By accomplishing the almost impossible feat महत् कर्म
Of ~~And~~ defeating the assembled kings.

117 Krishna,
My griefs are many... एवं क्लेशैः सुबहुभिः

क्लिश्यमाना सुदुःखिता

⊛ कुले महति जातास्मि
दिव्येन विधिना किल।
पाण्डवानां प्रिया भार्या
स्नुषा पाण्डोर्महात्मनः

...ls is not here.

...Pāṇḍavas. सिंहविक्रान्ता
...ng,

...s? दीर्घकालं
cowardly,
cruel → पापकर्मणां
दुर्बलीयसां

120 I was born into a noble family.
My birth was ~~miraculous.~~ divinely ordained. ⊛
I am the beloved wife of the Pāṇḍavas
And the daughter-in-law of ~~shining~~ Pāṇḍu.

mahā-ātmaned

*
स्तनावपतितौ पीनौ सुजातौ
शुभलक्षणौ ।
अभ्यवर्षत पाञ्चाली
दुःखजैर् अश्रुबिन्दुभिः ॥

a wife, सती
the presence
~~...~~ each of them
like Indra himself?"

122 Saying this (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Soft-spoken Draupadī covered her face
With her lotus-bud hands and started ~~crying~~. sobbing.

मृदुना
मृदुभाषिणी

123 The grief-rich tears of the Pāñcāla princess
Drenched her heavy, round, lovely breasts *
Graced with all the auspicious marks.

124 She wiped her eyes ~~again~~ and again.
ain and again. पुनः पुनः
grief-choked voice,

(**)
नैव मे पतयः सन्ति न पुत्रा
न च बान्धवाः ।
न भ्रातरो न च पिता
नैव त्वं मधुसूदन ॥

rothers, father, ~~you~~ — (**)
No one.
usūdana-Krishna.
v-class wretches,

way न च मे शाम्यते
abhā ? दुःखं कर्णो यत्
प्राहसत् तदा

127 Keśava.

(***)
चतुर्भिः कारणैः कृष्ण त्वया
रक्ष्यास्मि नित्यशः ।
सम्बन्धाद् गौरवात्
सख्यात् प्रभुत्वेनैव
केशव ॥

must help me. → (not in Critical Ed.) (***)
voman ?
otect me ?"
resence
na continued) :

7 Saying this, he took up
the reins and
galloped the horses furiously to
the battlefield.

8 Urged by the whip and the
expert reins, the
splendid horses zig-zagged, circled,
cut right and left,

9 Galloping with superb ease,
so graceful, so
fluent, they seemed to be flying
in the sky.

10 They seemed to be in tune with
the wishes of Dāruka's
son ; their vibrant hooves seemed
not to touch the ground.

11 Dāruka's son manoeuvred the
chariot so skilfully
in and out of Śālya's ranks that
all watched, marvelling.

12 The lord of Saubha, humiliated
by Pradyumna's skill,
fired three arrows in the direction
of Dāruka's son,

13 Who, completely unperturbed, continued
to weave the
chariot in and out of Śālya's ranks
exactly as before.

14 Śālya let off another sharp
volley of arrows
at Rukmiṇī's heroic son
(continued Krishna).

15 Foe-crushing, heroic Pradyumna,
with supreme dexterity,
smilingly pulverised the arrows
with a counter-shower.

16 Seeing his attack frustrated,
the Saubha-~~lord~~, using rājā /
the fearful māyā of anti-gods,
fired another volley. आसुरीं दारुणीं
मायामास्थाय

17 Pradyumna pulverised this ~~the~~
mahā-powerful Daitya weapon with the help of
his Brahmā-weapon, and hurled

माया (f.) = wisdom, extraordinary or supernatural power (only in the earlier language); illusion, unreality, deception, fraud, trick, sorcery, witchcraft, magic (Ṛg.Veda); phantom, apparition, duplicity (in Buddhism one of the 24 minor evil passions); illusion (in the Sāṁkhya identified with Prakṛti as the source of the visible universe); illusion personified (sometimes identified with Durgā, sometimes regarded as a daughter of Anṛta and Nirṛti or Nikṛti, and mother of Mṛtyu, or as a daughter of Adharma.

ALSO: COMPASSION, SYMPATHY

21 The gods, led by Indra, ~~and~~
lord of wealth (Dhaneśvara-Kubera, despatched
Nārada and the wind-god Vāyu
to Pradyumna.

22 ~~The two gods~~ Both approached Rukmiṇī's
son and gave him

I saw him long ago,
wandering with his bow
on Ṛsyamūka hill.

10 Daśaratha's mahātmā son
was like thousand-eyed
Namuci-slaying, lord-
of-Yama Indra ; he
dutifully accepted
forest-exile.

11 He was brave like Indra,
noble-minded, invincible ;
but he had to give up
pleasures and bear with
sorrow. It's adharma
to be proud of oneself.

12 Because they used truth to
conquer this sea-
earth, the kings
of Nābhāga and Bhāgīratha
found heaven. It's adharma
to be proud of oneself.

13 Alarka, king of Kāśī
and Karūṣa gave up
his kingdom and
wealth and was called
a saint. It's adharma
to be proud of oneself.

14 Because they obeyed
the Creator's laws
as revealed in the Vedas,
the seven ṛṣis shine
in the sky. It's adharma
to be proud of oneself.

सर्वाणि भूतानि नरेन्द्र पश्य
तथा यथावद् विहितं विधात्रा।
स्वयोनितः कर्म सदा चरन्ति
नेशो बलस्येति चरेदधर्मम्॥

23

men,

पश्य राजान्
नरेन्द्र

⊗(Strength is not an excuse to do adharma)

.... adharma

to be proud of ~~oneself~~ power.

16 ~~Lord of men,~~ O Indra among men, look:

all the world's creatures
conform to the laws

* Yudhisthira has no real power; he lacks self-confidence — he cannot even be proud of his strength, because he submits weakly to Fate.

1) Van Buitenen:
"So practise no un-Law, thinking 'Power is mine!'"

. power.

2) Sripad Damodar Sātvalekar
"मैं शक्तिमान हूं" यह सोचकर अधर्म मत करो।

यशश्च तेजश्च
तवापि दीप्तं
भास्करस्य

3) Gita Press
अपनेको बलका स्वामी समझकर अधर्म नहीं करना चाहिये।

4) Kisari Mohan Ganguly
... Should no one act unrighteously, saying 'I am mighty.'

:ds. दिशमुत्तरां

कर्णानार्थों हि यो धर्मो
मित्राणात्मनस्तथा ।
व्यसनं नाम तद् राजन्
न धर्मः स कुधर्म तत् ॥

P. Lāl Transcreation

(*)

धर्मं दुर्बलम्

22 Dharma can sometimes debilitate.
Tāta, dear brother, Sorrow and pleasure mean
nothing to a dead man, nor Dharma
and Artha to a weakling.

23 The man who practises Dharma for
the sake of Dharma
suffers. He is not the wise man.
A blind man cannot see
the light of the Sun ; so he cannot
see the truth of Dharma.

न स पण्डितः

24 The man who thinks wealth exists
for the sake of wealth,
doesn't know the purpose of wealth.
Wealth is in trust,
like cows grazing in a wood,
in a cowherd's charge.

यस्य च
अर्थार्थमेवार्थः
स च नार्थस्य कोविदः

25 The man who runs after Artha
without thinking of Dharma
and Kāma ~~deserves to be condemned,~~ is like a Brahmin-killer.
~~even to be killed.~~
He deserves death by one and all.

सततं यश्च कामार्थी
नेतरावनुतिष्ठति ।
मित्राणि तस्य नश्यन्ति
धर्मार्थाभ्यां च हीयते ॥

(**)

द्रव्यार्थस्पर्शसंयोगे
या प्रीतिरुपजायते।
स कामश्चित्तसंकल्प
शरीरं नास्य दृश्यते॥

28 - 35] 17

rom
and Artha पण्डिता:
asures

(*) सर्वथा धर्ममूलोऽर्थो
and Dharma in Artha ; धर्मश्चार्थपरिग्रहः।
each depends on the other,
like clouds and ocean. इतरेतरयोर्नीतौ विद्धि

30 Kāma is the name we give to मेघोदधी यथा॥
the pleasures of the senses;
therefore Artha leads to Kāma, which (*)
itself is a bodiless state. शरीरं नास्य दृश्यते

So Kāma is called अनङ्ग

31 O rājā! The man who wants Artha ~~should~~
also seeks much Dharma ; बृहन्तं धर्ममिच्छति
the Kāma-seeker ~~should seek~~ wants/ Artha.
seeks/ Kāma ~~leads~~ only ~~to~~ itself. → न कामादन्यमिच्छति

न हि कामेन कामोऽन्यः
साध्यते फलमेव तत्।
उपयोगात् फलस्यैव
काष्ठाद् भस्मेव पण्डितैः॥ (**)

s
ashes ;
The wise know this.

adharma

(**)

that he discards Dharma, deserves ~~death~~ to be killed by all.
He is the wicked one; in this world and the next.

35 It is clear that you know, O rājā,
what enjoyment can be had
from sources of wealth. You know
their nature and variety.

64 But he quickly recovered his
senses, stood up,
his body covered with blood,
his mind bewildered.

65 He paid mental homage to
the trident-wielding god,
fashioned a clay image of Śiva
and worshipped it with garlands.

66 He saw the same garlands
appear on the Kirāta's head.
Arjuna, best of Pāṇḍavas, delighted,
regained normalcy.

67 He prostrated himself at Śiva's
feet, who was pleased.
With a cloud-roaring voice, Śiva
said to surprised Arjuna :

68 "Phālguna, your incomparable
prowess pleases me.
There is no Kṣatriya who has
your courage and fortitude.

69 Mighty-armed hero, great Bharata,
faultless one, your prowess
almost equals mine. I am pleased
with you. Look !

70 Large-eyed hero, I will give you
special vision to see me.
You were once a ṛṣi ; you will now
be able to defeat even gods.

71 I am so happy with you
that I will give you
an invincible weapon ; and soon
you will have other weapons."

72 Phālguna-Arjuna saw the ~~radiant~~ mahā-radiant god, ~~the mighty god~~ Mahādeva-Śiva,

गिरिशं the dweller of mountains, the

शूलपाणिनम् trident-wielder and his ~~consort~~ devī.

Conqueror of enemies' cities

73 Pārtha-Arjuna knelt and bowed his head before ~~the great~~ in praṇāma

परपुरंजयः ~~conqueror of enemies' cities,~~ before Hara-Śiva

and worshipped ~~Hara~~ him: प्रसादयामास

...cks !

कपर्दिन् सर्वदेवेश ⊛ ...aga ! ⊛

भगनेत्रनिपातन् । ...!

देवदेव महादेव ...ed god !

नीलग्रीव जटाधर ॥74॥ ⊛⊛

कारणानां च परमं जाने ...of all causes.

त्वां त्र्यम्बकं विभुम् । ...gods.

...universe.

देवानां च गतिं देव ...d men

त्वत्प्रसूतमिदं जगत् ॥75

⊛⊛

पिनाकगोप्त्रे सूर्याय ...f Dakṣa.

मङ्गल्याय च वेधसे । !

...orehead, ललाटाक्षाय

पसादये त्वां भगवान्

...e One (applied to various gods)

सर्वभूतमहेश्वर ॥ 78॥

*** ... son of Indra by Paulomī (in Bh. Purāṇa)

Gita Press:— ⊛

लोगों की रक्षा के लिए
केवल बाणों के द्वारा ही
हिंसक पशुओं को
मारा करते थे

: Lāl Transcreation

वानेयान् मृगान्
पुरूषर्षभाः

on forest-food and the meat of deer,
killed with plain arrows, —
meat they sanctified by offering
it first to the Brahmins.

⊛ शुद्धैर्बाणैः (purified)?

O rājā!

5 Fire-worshipping and non-fire-
worshipping Brahmins
followed the large-bow-carrying

सागन्योऽनग्नय

रुरून् कृष्णमृगांश्चैव
मेध्यांश्चान्यान् वनचरान्

ied

hira मोक्षविदां

purified
sanctified

deer

(**) Gita Press: Pandavas were purified by killing violent animals like lions and tigers!

(**) black gazelles?

8 None of those who lived with
Yudhiṣṭhira in the forest
looked pale, weak, thin, diseased,
timid, or fearful.

Finest of the Kauravas

9 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira looked
after his brothers as if
they were his sons, and his relatives
as if they were his brothers.

कौरव श्रेष्ठः

10 Famed Draupadī would first
offer food to her husbands

यशस्विनी

⊛ धनुर्धाराणां मृगाणां
क्षयं ...
killed robbers (डाकू) and
violent animals and gave the
skins to Brahmins (Gita Press) –
Satvalekar: रोज जाकर मांस के
लिये हरिणों का नाश करते थे

mother —

d
north — ⊛
lled
~~were soon all killed~~ by these bow-wielders
for the sake of their meat.

12 The Pāṇḍavas lived
in the forest of Kāmyaka
for five years ;
They ~~remembered~~ missed Arjuna, उत्सुकानाम्
but ~~and~~ busied themselves
studying, reciting, and sacrificing.

16 DECEMBER 2001

Professor P. Lal reads Sanjaya's criticism of Dhritarashtra, and Yudhisthira's eagerness to listen to the story of Nala and Damayanti in the 108th weekly session of his English transcreation of the complete Mahabharata of Vyasa at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 16 December 2001 at 11 am.

4 And I contrast them with the
patience, bravery, fortitude,
and amazing mutual love of the
rich-in-prowess Pāṇḍavas.

न रात्रौ न दिवा सूत शान्तिं प्राप्नोमि वै क्षणम्

37 "You will, with the Gāṇḍīva-wielder's
help, O ~~great warrior~~ mahā-muscled one,
Suyodhana- kill the evil-minded ~~Duryodhana~~ —
but after thirteen years.

38 As for your suggestion, ~~that~~ Pārtha-Bhīma,
that the exile-period can be treated प्राप्तः काल इति
my lord, as over, that is a lie, and lies
have no place in my heart. अनृतं नोत्सहे तत्क्रम
प्रभो
Kaunteya-Bhīma,
39 ~~Kunti's son~~, you will not need न हि ऐतन मम विद्यते
the evil ~~the sinful~~ means of
Suyodhana- deceit in order to kill ~~Duryodhana~~
and his followers. You are invincible." दुर्धर्ष

40 While Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
was speaking to Bhīma,
there came to the forest the mahā-fortune-favoured
mahā-~~shining~~ ṛṣi Bṛhadaśva. महाभागो

41 Dharmarāja ~~Mahātmā-king~~ Yudhiṣṭhira
offered him a bowl of madhuparka
honey, curd, ghee, sugar and milk
~~in respectful homage~~ with pūjā-respect.
as ordained in the śāstras. शास्त्रवत्

42 When the ṛṣi had sat down,
maha-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira, with the bowl, पूजयामास
महाबाहो sat at his feet, and said
to him sadly : कृपणं

Bhagavan,
43 "~~Holy one~~, tempted to gamble
by ~~the~~ evil-minded gamblers,
and scheming ~~Duryodhana~~ I lost
my wealth and kingdom.

44 I am a novice in dice.
The scoundrels cheated,
I lost, and they dragged my dearer- नीता प्राणेभ्यो-
than-life wife into the sabhā. ऽपि

45 They defeated me a second time,
and exiled me to
this fearful forest where I live
precariously, dressed in deerskin.

46 I pass my days miserably — परमदुःखित:
in the forest.
सुदारुणा: The harsh words that I heard
at the time of

अस्ति राजा मया
कश्चिदल्पभाग्यतरो भुवि ।
भवता दृष्टपूर्वो वा
श्रुतपूर्वोऽपि वा क्वचित् ॥

words
ıey make
सर्वरात्रिर्विचिन्तयन्
on
maha-ātmaned
r who

ing, large-hearted,
प्रियवादिनं
दयासुत्तमम्

dreadful-deed-doer ... Arjuna again,
Arjuna, returning from heaven
with his hoard of arms?

50 Is there any ~~king~~ rājā on earth
more miserable than me?
Have you heard of one, seen one?
I can think of none."

51 "Pāṇḍu's son," said Bṛhadaśva, mahārāja,
"you think there's no king
more miserable than you. Let me tell
you the story of one such.

53 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira said to Bṛhadaśva:
"Bhagavan, Holy one, I am eager
to hear the story of the ~~king with~~ rājā whose
sorrow exceeded mine."

52 Blameless one, I will tell you this story
if you want me to.
There was a rājā on this earth
who suffered more than you."

इताशमीशम् देवानाम् Lord of the gods Agni

देवेभ्योऽहं नमस्कृत्य ⊛ The P. Lāl Transcreation

सर्वेभ्यः पृथिवीपते। ivelling,

वृणे त्वामेव भर्तारं Hutāśa-

सत्यमेतद् ब्रवीमि ते॥ यस्य दण्डभयात् men Rod

(not in Crit. Ed.!!)

Mahendra- ~~the great~~ Indra, lord
of the gods, ~~full of dharma~~, a dharmātma, a mahātmā
Destroyer of Daitya and Dānava ~~subduer of the~~ anti gods? दैत्यदानवमर्दनम्

12 If you have secret feelings in
your heart for Varuṇa,
express them now. This is the best
advice that I have."

13 When she heard the Niṣadha king
speak in this way,
Damayantī's eyes filled with tears.
She said to him :

14 "Ruler of the earth, the truth
is ~~that I love you~~ this : ⊛
I namaskāra ~~I pay my respects to~~ the gods,
but I choose you for husband."

15 She trembled as she said this. Her hands were folded in añjali.
Rājā Nala, messenger of the gods,
with folded palms said, "~~Lovely one,~~ Gracious one,
fortune-favoured one, do what is best.

भद्रे कल्याणि

16 I have ~~the~~ promised the gods,
I come to speak on
their behalf; how can I seek
my own interest now? कथं स्वार्थं इह उत्सहे

17 If dharma can go together
with self-interest, some

means may be found. ~~Lovely~~ Gracious lady,
act on that principle." ** भद्रे

एष धर्मो यदि स्वार्थो
ममापि भविता ततः ।
एवं स्वार्थं करिष्यामि
तथा भद्रे विधीयताम् ॥

r

one नरेश्वर

wed, येन दोषो न भविता

** ds

led by Indra
should all come together to
my svayamvara.

O tiger-among-men! नरव्याघ्र

21 It will be easy for me to choose
you as my husband
at the time of the svayamvara.
Nothing wrong in this, "O lord of men." नरेश्वर

22 Rājā Nala heard these words of the
Vidarbha king's daughter,
and returned to the house where
the gods were staying.

23 The guardians of the world,
all ~~mighty lords,~~ mahā-lords, महेश्वराः
asked him what happened in
the course of his mission.

24 "Did you see Damayantī,
the sweet-smiling one ? शुचिस्मिता
अनघ Faultless king, tell us in detail
all that took place."

25 "As you instructed," replied Nala,
"I entered the many-chambered

साहं कमलगर्भाभमपश्यन्ती हृदि प्रियम् ।
न विन्दामि अमरप्रख्यं प्रियं प्राणेश्वरं प्रभुम् ॥

dman,
ng
ɔle to rest
hts.

im
him;

*

rt,
my lotus-radiant lord,
my god, my heart's delight, who
is the equal of the gods."

(गर्भ)
(as lovely as the inside of a lotus)

64 Seeing Damayantī's eyes brim
with tears, and grief
thicken her voice, the queen-mother
Rājamātā said to her:

65 "Sweet lady, auspicious one, कल्याणि भद्रे
stay with me here.
You have pleased me. My servants
will look for your husband.

66 Or it may so happen that he अपि वा
will return by himself स्वयमागच्छेत्
from the forest. But stay here—
you will find your husband."

67 "Mother of heroes," said Damayantī, वीरप्रजायिनी
touched by the queen-mother's
words, "I will live with you
three/ but on ~~two~~ conditions—

68 One, ~~that I do not have to~~ I will not
eat any leftovers; two, not wash anyone's feet;
three, ~~two, that I do not have to~~ I will not
speak to any men.

उच्छिष्टं नैव भुञ्जीयां न कुर्यां पादधावनं ।
च नाहं पुरुषानन्यान् प्रभाषेयं कथंचन ॥

69 If any man tries to possess me,
you will punish him;
if he persist, the punishment is death.
I have vowed this. → द्विते मे व्रतमाहितम_

70 I will meet only those
Brāhmins who go in search
of my husband. I am agreeable
to staying on these conditions.

71 If this cannot be, I have
no desire to live."
The queen-mother listened carefully,
and replied:

72 "I agree. Your vow is noble."
These were the words
with which the ~~queen-mother~~ Rājamātā
granted Damayantī's request.

73 She called her daughter Sunandā
and said, "Sunandā, this
girl is a devī, she will now
be your ~~attendant~~ Sairindhrī. attendant
देवरूपिणी

74 She is about your age,
so treat her like a ~~companion~~, sakhī,
and play with her without any
reservation of any kind."

75 Sunandā joyfully accepted
Damayantī and, surrounded
by her *sakhis*, led her to
the inner apartments.
परमसंहृष्टा

76 Damayantī was moved by the
pūjā-respect ~~noble conduct of her~~ given by Sunandā;
~~companion~~; her desires were satisfied,
she stayed in the palace.

12 I too know enough about
horses, so I am
his charioteer. Ṛtuparṇa has
appointed me cook as well."

13 "Vārṣṇeya then must know,"
Keśinī said, Bāhuka!
rājā / "where ~~king~~ Nala is. Has he
told you anything ?"

14 "After bringing noble Nala's
children here," Bāhuka
replied, "Vārṣṇeya went away.
He knows nothing about Nala.
Illustrious lady!

शुभकर्मणः

न च अन्य पुरुषः कश्चिन्नलं
वेत्ति यशस्विनि ।
गूढश्चरति लोकेऽस्मिन्
नष्टरूपो महीपतिः ॥

elf *

आत्मैव तु नलं वेद
या चास्य तदनन्तरा ।

Satvalekar = पत्नी
van Buitenen
she who is
closest to him

...kept repeating these words which
are ~~suit~~ a woman's ~~lips~~ words.

नारी वाक्यानि वाक्यानि

18 *My beloved gambler, did you
cut off half of my cloth,
and desert your dear
and devoted sleeping wife ?*

प्रियां प्रिय

19 *She waits for you exactly
as you left her,
covered with a half-cloth
and moaning your absence,* day and night.

of the earth, heroic one,

20 *Lord ~~mighty one~~, be kind*
to her and return
to her, who will not stop weeping
until you come.

Mahā-minded

21 *~~Noble~~ one, tell her the story*
that she likes to hear,
speak words that Vidarbha's daughter
loves to hear.

22 When you heard these words,
you replied to the
Brahmin. Reply now too. Damayanti
waits eagerly."

O Kaurava descendant Yudhisthira!

23 When he heard Keśinī speak
like this (continued
Bṛhadaśva), Nala's heart suffered,
his eyes filled with tears.

हृदयं व्यथितं

अश्रुपूर्णे लोचने

24 He checked his grief, but he
could not hide the
burning sorrow in his voice as
he said to her :

p. 20-21

25 "Though calamity overtake them,
noble women know how
to protect themselves ; they find heaven's
truth, no doubt of that.

कुलस्त्रियः

25 Even if their husbands desert them,
superior ~~noble~~ women do not
become angry ; their character ~~goodness~~ gives them
the strength of patience.

वरास्त्रियः

चारित्र कवचान्

27 She should not show anger, for
the person who deserted her
was foolish and troubled and could not
offer her happiness.

(aimoni)

MAHABHARATA VOL 47 OCTOBER 1972

काश्मीरेष्वेव नागस्य भवनं तक्षकस्य

90 Vitastā is in Kāśmīra, and
it is the abode of
the Nāga Takṣaka ; it can cleanse
सर्वपापप्रमोचनम् all one's wrong-doings.

91 Bathing there definitely obtains the
merits of the ~~Bājpeya~~ Vājapeya
yajña ; his ātman purified, the pilgrim
achieves the perfect goal.

92 After this one should go to the
NOTE Vaḍavā-tīrtha, famed
in the three worlds. After bathing
there in the evening, saṁdhyā,

93 One should offer rice boiled in milk
and butter to the seven-
flamed god. A gift offered to the

ऐश्वर्य = superhuman power
consisting of:
1) aṇiman (1) 2) laghiman (2)
3) mahiman (3) 4) prāpti (4)
5) prākāmya (5) 6) vaśitva (6)
7) iśitva (7) 8) Kāmāvasāitva (8)

...en, मनुजाधिप lord of men,
...ered worship

oblation of rice, barley and pulse boiled with butter and milk

of Viṣṇu ; they cooked
caru here and propitiated ~~him~~ Keśava-Viṣṇu
with seven Vedic mantras ;
97 Keśava-Viṣṇu, pleased, bestowed on them
the eightfold qualities
called Aiśvarya and gave whatever
they wished to obtain, *

(1) minuteness, fineness (2) lightness, absence of weight, levity
(3) majesty, glory (4) reach, range, determination
(5) freedom of will (6) self-discipline (7) supremacy (8) power to suppress desire

98 And then the divinity vanished
like a flash of
lightning. That is why the place
is called Sapta-caru.

99 If seven *carus* are offered here,
more merit accrues than
a thousand-cow gift, one hundred Rājasūyas
and one thousand Aśvamedhas.

100 From here one should proceed to
Rudrapada; worshipping NOTE
Mahādeva, -Śiva, there earns one the merit
of an Aśvamedha yajña.

101 Being a brahmacārī in the *tīrtha*
of Maṇimanta, and staying NOTE
there one night, earns one the merits
of an *agniṣṭoma*-yajña.

102 After this one goes to Devikā, NOTE
famous the world over.
O bull-brave Bhārata, भरतर्षभ
It is said that the Brahmin caste came
into existence here.

103 Here is the place sacred to trident- त्रिशूलपाणे:
wielding Śiva,
famous the world over. Bathing in Devikā
and worshipping Maheśvara,-Śiva,

104 And offering *caru* to the other gods,
O bull-brave ~~O great~~ Bhārata,

कामाख्यं तत्र रुद्रस्य — सर्वकामसमृद्धस्य (has; Śiva)
तीर्थं देवनिषेवितम् । NOTE *
तत्र स्नात्वा नरः क्षिप्रम् — arata descendant.
सिद्धिं प्राप्नोति भारत॥

*

MAHABHARATA VOL 48 NOVEMBER 1972

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated from Sanskrit
by P. Lal

Volume 48

THE TĪRTHA-YATRĀ PARVA
IN THF VANA PARVA

of Prajāpati. Yudhiṣṭhira, the Vedas,

न वेदवचनात् तात
न लोकवचनादपि ।
मतिरुत्क्रमणीया ते
प्रयागमरणं प्रति ॥

re

kingdoms

endant,

rayāga

पुण्यतमम्

80 One ~~is cleansed of all wrong-~~ death
~~doings~~ if one goes to नामसंकीर्तनादपि
this *tīrtha*, chants its name, and ~~collects~~
~~a little of its earth.~~ is cleansed of all ill-deeds.

मृत्युकालभयात् प्रमुच्यते

81 The pilgrim who bathes in this
most sacred of confluences samgama-
obtains the merits of a Rājasūya
and an Aśvamedha.

82 O Bhārata descendant, the gods themselves worship
at this sacrificial
altar. A little given in charity here
multiplies a thousandfold.

83 Tāta, Child, let neither Vedic text
nor mortal opinion
dissuade you from the desire of
dying in Prayāga.

84 Wise men say that six crore
and ten thousand कुरुनन्दन
tīrthas can be found in Prayāga
alone, O ~~Kuru~~ Kaurava-descendant.

85 Bathing where the Gaṅgā and
Yamunā meet, one obtains

17 MARCH 2002 →

Professor P. Lal reads of the merits accruing from the tirthas of the Ganga and east and south India in the 121st weekly Sunday session of his English Transcreation of the complete Mahabharata of Vyasa at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 17 March 2002 at 11 a.m.

88 Bathing anywhere in the Gaṅgā gives
the merits of a pilgrimage
to Kurukṣetra; Kanakhala is very sacred,
but most sacred is Prayāga.

89 One hundred crimes are burnt away
by the waters as
fuel is burnt by fire, when a pilgrim
bathes in the Gaṅgā.

90 In the Satya-yuga all *tīrthas* were
all-holy; in the Tretā,
Puṣkara; in Dvāpara, Kurukṣetra;
in Kali-yuga, Gaṅgā. (*)

(*) सर्वं कृतयुगे पुण्यं
त्रेतायां पुष्करं स्मृतम् ।
द्वापरेऽपि कुरुक्षेत्रं
गङ्गा कलियुगे स्मृता ॥

...e
...a life
...etra,
...generations,
...en

मध्यमेषु (middle of the region tirthas)

न अव्रती न अकृतात्मा च न अशुचिर्न च तस्करः

108 All these *tīrthas* with their pure
ātman, their faith
in divinity, and their knowledge of
the Vedas. The man

109 Indisciplined, impure, not observing
vows, the thief, the mean-
motived cannot bathe in these *tīrthas*.
You ~~are noble and pure,~~ know dharma and artha,

110 Your goodness has pleased your father,
your grandfather, your
great-grandfather, the gods and
Brahmā Pitāmaha,—

111 And the ṛṣis. O Vāsava-like hero, O Bhīṣma, (Indra-)
you who know dharma, you will attain the
realm of the Vasus, and obtain eternal
fame on earth.

112 Nārada said: "With these words
the bhagavān ~~the great~~ ṛṣi
Pulastya cheerfully bid Bhīṣma farewell,
and disappeared.

113 O tiger among the Kauravas, Yudhiṣṭhira, ~~Great Kuru~~, Bhīṣma, who knew
the deepest meanings शास्त्रतत्त्वार्थदर्शिवान्
of the śāstras, travelled the world over (had insight into)
at Pulastya's command, कुरुशार्दूल

114 O mahā-fortune-favoured one, he
And ended his pilgrimage at महाभाग
Prayāga, the climax
of his mahā-/merit-earning visits to the defect-
~~sin~~-removing *tīrthas*. महापुण्या

115 The man who covers the world
in such pilgrimage,
obtains the ~~merits~~ fruits/ of a hundred Aśvamedhas
and attains mokṣa.

फलं प्रेत्य स मोक्ष्यति

(is ! ca)

116 Pṛthā's son, you will obtain
eight times the merit
that the finest of Kurus, Bhīṣma,
was able to obtain.

117 Since you will take all these ṛṣis
to the *tīrthas,* your
merits will be eight times greater.
The *tīrthas* are full
of rākṣasas; none but you can
hope to visit them.

118 The man who rises early in the
morning and recites
this narrative of the *tīrthas*
is cleansed of his wrongs.

119 These most excellent ṛṣis—Vālmīki
and Kaśyapa,
Ātreya, Kuṇḍajahara, Viśvāmitra,
and Gautama,

120 Asita, Devala, Mārkaṇḍeya,
and Gālava,
Bharadvāja, Vasiṣṭha, and
the *muni* Uddālaka,

121 Śaunaka, excellent-in-tapasyā
Vyāsa and his son,
foremost of *munis* Durvāsas,
and great Jābāli—

122 All these mighty ṛṣis are
waiting for you.
Go on your *tīrtha,* great king,
and meet them.

ऋषिर्महान् महाभागो जमदग्निर्महायशाः ।

16 Here is the ~~lovely, holy forest~~ lovely, holy forest
of Palāśa, where
the illustrious, ~~incomparable~~ Jamadagni
performed many yajñas, — mahā-fortune-favoured mahārishi

17 While all the major rivers in
their embodied forms,
bringing their holy waters, stood
reverently around ~~that~~ that incomparable ṛṣi.

Valiant Mahārāja!

18 Here Viśvāvasu himself, observing (king of Gandharvas)
the yajña ~~being~~ dīkṣa
being performed by the mahātmā ṛṣi,
chanted this śloka :

इमं श्लोकं प्रेक्ष्य दीक्षां

यजमानस्य वै देवान्
जमदग्नेर्महात्मनः ।
आगम्य सरितो विप्रान्
मधुना समतर्पयन् ॥

abited

the

Ganga cuts through the
king of mountains. ~~Divine~~ ṛṣis consider this, O rājā,
Brahmā- exceptionally sacred.

O Kaurava descendant!

22 Sanatkumāra was among the first
to visit Kanakhala.
Here is the mountain Puru where
Pururavas was born,

23 And where Bhṛgu practised tapasyā, surrounded by mahā-ṛṣis.
That is why that āśrama,
O rājā, has become known by the name
of Bhṛgutuṅga.

यः स भूतं भविष्यच्च भवच्च भरतर्षभ।
नारायणः प्रभुर्विष्णुः शाश्वतः पुरुषोत्तमः॥
तस्य अतियशसः पुण्यां
विशालां बदरीमनु।
आश्रमः ख्यायते पुन्यः
त्रिषु लोकेषु विश्रुतः॥

[- 30] 25

ure,

1

25 His ~~holy~~ supremely auspicious āśrama can be found
there, in Badarī
āśrama, celebrated in the three worlds
from ancient times.

26 Near Badarī, ~~your majesty~~ O rājā, where now
the Gaṅgā runs cool,
it once flowed warm, and her banks
were covered with goldwash.

गङ्गा शीत-
तोयवहा

27 ~~Famous and effolgent~~ Mahā-fortune-favoured and mahā-radiant ṛṣis and
gods come here
daily to ~~pay homage to the~~ namaskāra
the radiant god Viṣṇu.

→ महाभागा महौजसः

28 Where Nārāyaṇa is, the
Eternal Paramātmā,
there is the universe with all
its holy *tīrthas.*

यत्र नारायणो देवः
परमात्मा सनातनः
तत्र कृत्स्नं जगत् सर्वं
तीर्थानि

29 He is Pure
He the Supreme Brahmā
He the *Tīrtha*
He the ~~Hermitage~~ Forest of Tapasyā
He is the First

तत् पुण्यं परमं ब्रह्म
तत् तीर्थं तत् तपोवनम्।
तत् ~~[illegible]~~ परं परमं देवं
भूतानां परमेश्वरम्॥

ord of all life

शाश्वतं परमं चैव
धातारं परमं पदं
यं विदित्वा न शोचन्ति
विद्वांसः शास्त्रदृष्टयः

प:स भूतं भविष्यच्च भवच्च भरतर्षभ।
नारायणः प्रभुर्विष्णुः शाश्वतः पुरुषोत्तमः॥
तस्य अतियशसः पुण्यां
विशालां बदरीमनु।
आश्रमः ख्यायते पुण्यः (*)
त्रिषु लोकेषु विश्रुतः॥

-30] 25

ure,

1

(*)

supremely auspicious

25 His ~~holy~~ āśrama can be found
there, in Badarī
āśrama, celebrated in the three worlds
from ancient times.

O rājā

26 Near Badarī, ~~your majesty~~, where now
the Gaṅgā runs cool, → गङ्गा शीत-
it once flowed warm, and her banks तोयवहा
were covered with goldwash.

Mahā-fortune-favoured and mahā-radiant

27 ~~Famous and effulgent~~ ṛṣis and → महाभागा महौजसः
gods come here
daily to ~~pay homage to the~~ namaskāra
the radiant god Viṣṇu.

28 Where Nārāyaṇa is, the यत्र नारायणो देवः
Eternal Paramātmā, परमात्मा सनातनः
there is the universe with all तत्र कृत्स्नं जगत् सर्वं
its holy *tīrthas*. तीर्थानि

29 He is Pure
He the Supreme Brahmā
He the *Tīrtha*
He the ~~Hermitage~~ Forest of Tapasyā
He is the First

(*)(*)

तत् पुण्यं परमं ब्रह्म
तत् तीर्थं तत् तपोवनम्।
तत् परं परमं देवं
भूतानां परमेश्वरम्॥

Lord of all life

शाश्वतं परमं चैव
धातारं परमं पदं
यं विदित्वा न शोचन्ति
(*)(*) विद्वांसः शास्त्रदृष्टयः

14 As well as the mahā-Ṛṣi-yajña.
Here is the ~~great~~ undecaying
Mahā-banyan. Any yajña performed here
brings everlasting ~~merit.~~ fruit.

अक्षयवटो महान्
→ अक्षयं फलं

15 The Pāṇḍavas began fasting there
with a serene mind.
Hundreds of ~~ascetic~~ tapasyā-rich Brahmins flocked
to see them.

निश्चितमानसाः

16 The old-in-knowledge, Veda-wise
Brahmins also took
the Four-Month Vow, as laid down
by the ancient ṛṣis
and, forming a court-like assembly,
~~discussed various subjects.~~ narrated sacred kathās.

विद्यातपोवृद्धा
कथां पुण्यां

17 ~~Your majesty, the extraordinarily~~ O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, the wonderfully
learned, vow-strict Brahmin
Śamaṭha spoke of Gaya, the
son of Amūrtaraya.

18 "Amūrtaraya's son is Gaya,"
said Śamaṭha,
"an excellent ~~royal~~ rājā-ṛṣi. O Bharata descendant,
let me recite his sacred deeds.

पुण्यानि यस्य
कर्माणि तानि
मे शृणु भारत

19 He performed many yajñas here ;
food and dakṣiṇā-gifts were
lavished ; rice was cooked in hundreds
of thousands of heaps.

20 Ghee and curds formed hundreds
of lakes and rivers,
and thickly cooked curries flowed
in thousands of streams.

नद्यो बहुशतास्तथा
व्यञ्जनानां सहस्रशः
व्य ञ्ज

21 Day after day they were given to
all who asked.
In addition, Brahmins were fed
with specially-cooked dishes.

22 Great Bharata, when the time of
dakṣiṇā-offering came,
the Veda-chanting seemed to reach heaven ;
nothing else could be heard.

23 The sacred sounds filled the earth,
the sky, the points of
the firmament, heaven itself — and
many wonders were seen.

24 Finest of Bharatas, delighted with
the food and drink,
men went about from country to
country, chanting :

25 *Who wants to eat more*
In the yajña of Gaya ?
Twentyfive hills of food
Still remain uneaten.

26 *What radiant Gaya has done*
Was never done in the past,
What radiant Gaya has done
Will never be done in the future.

27 *The gods are so satiated*
With the offerings of ghee
They are unable to eat
Anything of anything else.

28 *Who will count the dakṣiṇā*
Given at Gaya's yajña,
Like grains of sand on earth,
Stars in the sky, and
Raindrops in a shower.

21 "Lopāmudrā, slim-waisted beauty,"
said Agastya,
"I do not have the riches that
your father has,

22 She replied, "Holy one, your tapasyā
can instantly bring
in front of me all the riches in
the world of men."

23 "What you say is right," replied
Agastya, "but that
would be a waste of tapasyā. Let
me not waste my powers."

24 "My fertile period will not last
forever," Lopāmudrā said,
"and I do not want intercourse
at any other time.

25 Nor do I wish that you should
diminish in dharma.
Find a way to grant my wish
without wasting your tapasyā."

26 "Lovely lady," said Agastya,
"if your mind is made up,
I will find the necessary riches.
Wait here till I return."

SECTION 98

1 Agastya went away (Lomaśa said)
to beg wealth from
king Śrutarvas, who was thought to be
richer than other kings.

Śānti Parva MHB 88 = 343

Complicated story of the births of Agastya and Vasiṣṭha.

Varuna solicits Urvaśī lustfully; she refuses him. She accepts Mitra, but Varuṇa's semen is kept in a jar (test-tube?). Urvaśī is stricken with remorse, and Mitra's semen inside her oozes out and is collected along with Varuna's semen in the jar. Two babies are born: Agastya and Vasiṣṭha. They are known as "Maitrāvaruṇi".

91 17

कुम्भयोनिमुपागतं

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प्राणिनां पीडां

7 He went with Śrutarvas to Bradhnaśva, rājā

who came out to

receive them and gave them a

courteous welcome.

Bradhnaśva

8 With the *arghya* offering and water

to wash their feet.

Then he gently enquired the reason

of their visit. for

9 "Ruler of the world," said Agastya,

"I have come to you

for wealth. Give me whatever portion

you can spare."

10 चिरंजीवी :
(Crow is one !!)

Il Transcreation

1. NĀRADA wanders through heaven and earth with ektārā
2. VYĀSA
3. HANUMĀN because of his śraddhā / bhakti for RĀMA
4. VIBHĪṢAṆA because he joined RĀMA, though that involved betrayal of his brother RĀVAṆA
5. MARU, grandson of AGNIVARṆA, who is alive in a samādhi state, & will repeople the earth with Kṣatriyas
6. PARAŚURĀMA because he successfully exterminated the Kṣatriyas
7. BALI the virtuous Daitya anti-god king who lost his kingdom to Viṣṇu as Vāmana
8. AŚVATTĀMAN, son of Droṇa
9. KṚPA, grandson of Gotama, cursed for killing sleeping Pāndavas
10. MĀRKAṆḌEYA son of Mṛkanda who knows all about all the yugas

"I have come to you
for wealth. Give we whatever portion
you can spare."

हाधनम्

महामना

राजसत्तम:

पृथिवीपते

वित्तकामानिह

प्राप्तान् विद्धि

16 The ~~king~~ rājā placed the accounts of
his treasury before
the three and said, "You are free to
take what you like."

17 The ~~just~~ honest ṛṣi saw that royal income
and expenditure were equal,
and realised that to take anything
would be to harm others.

18 All the three kings looked
at each other;
they looked at the mi and
said in one voice :

19 "Brahmin, there is an anti-god
named Ilvala who
is supposed to be fabulously wealthy.
Let us ask from him."

20 The suggestion that they should
approach Ilvala
for wealth seemed all right,
so they went to him.

SECTION 99

1 Getting news that a ṛṣi and
some kings were coming,
Ilvala and his relatives went out
to welcome them.

2 The greatest of the anti-gods Ilvala
offered them hospitality
and fed them the flesh
of his goat-brother Vātāpi.

3 Seeing the great anti-god Vātāpi
cooked in that way,
all the royal ṛṣis were shocked
and nearly fainted.

The greatest of ṛṣis Agastya
said to them,
"Be comforted. Leave it to me to
eat the anti-god."

5 Morning and evening holy men
struggled upward with libations; swarms of flies bit
devotees, obstructing tapasyā.

6 Men fell sick, and melancholia
overpowered them.
Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira asked Lomaśa
about these weird happenings.

7 "Refulgent ṛṣi," Yudhiṣṭhira asked,
"what is the secret,
behind these supernatural happenings
on this holy hill?"

8 Let me tell you, foe-chastiser
(Lomaśa said), all
that I have heard about these
phenomena. Listen carefully.

9 On Ṛṣabha hill here there lived
for many hundred years
a ṛṣi of extraordinary tapasyā whose
name was Ṛṣabha.

10 Because the talk of visitors
interrupted his tapasyā,
he said to the hill, "Throw stones
on all who talk here.

11 And let the winds blow loudly,
suppressing the talk of
visitors here; let roaring clouds
make their words inaudible."

12 This is what the great ṛṣi
ordered — some deeds he did
out of anger, others he
expressly prohibited.

O rājā!

13 It is said that when in the past
the gods visited
... there

"Silence can exist without speech, but speech cannot exist without silence."
("The World of Silence" by Max Picard (German, 1948), preface by Gabriel Marcel; English translation 1952.)

I not

by

ught

16 And no person can ascend this mahā-mountain high hill unless
he has practised severe tapasyā.
नियतवाग् भव ← So, take the Vow of Silence.

महागिरि

17 Here, O descendant of Bharata,
the gods performed yajñas
whose signs can be seen clearly
even to this day.

तेषामेतानि लिङ्गानि दृश्यन्तेऽद्य अपि

18 The grass here is all sacred
kuśa — the entire
slope is *kuśa*-grassed. The trees here
So many look like *yajña*-poles.

यूपप्रकारा बहवो वृक्षाः

19 Gods and ṛṣis live on this hill,
and can be seen,
morning and evening, feeding carrying libations
to for the sacred fire Havyavāhana.

20 Bathing here means the total cleansing
removal of one's crimes.
So perform your ablutions here
with your younger brothers.

पाप्माभिहन्यते

approach it and be blessed, ~~and~~ O rājā,
and straddle the sea.

25 When you approach it, ~~O~~ O descendant of Ajamīḍha,
chant ~~perform~~ the disaster-averting
svasti-benediction; ~~averting ritual~~; this altar goes
down to the deepest sea.

26 *Oṃ !*
I bow to the Protector of the Universe !
I bow to Him Who transcends the Universe !
O *God of gods !* Deveśa!
Come and live in the salt-tasting ocean !

27 *Fire and Sun and the Divine Waters —*
These are your womb.
You are the seed of Viṣṇu,
You the navel of nectar !
With these words of truth, O Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
Approach the altar.

28 *O Great Ocean,*
Fire is your Womb,
Earth is your Body,
Viṣṇu's seed your breath of life,
You are the navel of nectar !
With these words of truth, O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
Clearly and reverently recited,
Should one bathe in the Ocean, the lord of all rivers.

29 If that cannot be done, ~~Kunti's~~ O finest
of the Kauravas ~~son~~, do not touch the womb
of this divine mass of waters even
with a *Kuśa* grass.

30 The svasti-chanting ~~warding-off evil ritual~~ over,
mahā-ātman ~~mahātmā~~ Yudhiṣṭhira
bathed in the ocean.

Following Lomaśa's instructions,
he went to Mahendra mountain
and passed the night there.

SECTION 115

1 Lord-of-the-earth Yudhiṣṭhira पृथिवीपतिः
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

ॐ नमो विश्वगुप्ताय *
नमो विश्वपराय ते।
सांनिध्यं कुरु देवेश
सागरे लवणाम्भसि ॥26

अग्निर्मित्रो योनिरापोऽथ देव्यो
विष्णो रेतस्त्वममृतस्य नाभिः।
एवं ब्रुवन् पाण्डव सत्यवाक्यं
वेदीमिमां त्वं तरसाधिरोह॥ 27

कदा तु रामो
भगवांस्तापसान्
दर्शयिष्यति

अग्निश्च ते योनिरिडा च देहो
रेतोधा विष्णोरमृतस्य नाभिः।
एवं जपन् पाण्डव सत्यवाक्यं
ततोऽवगाहेत पतिं नदीनाम्॥ 28

MAHABHARATA VOL 52 MARCH 1973

2 JUNE 2002

Professor P. Lal reads the inspiring story of Raja Shibi and the hawk in the 131st weekly Sunday session of his complete English transcreation of the Mahabharata of Vyasa at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 2 June 2002 at 11 a.m.

gold *padma*-coins.

3 Son of Kunti, he achieved the
highest success by
his yajñas and tapasyā. This
is the place where

4 The king of kings, Nahuṣa's son
Yayāti, performed
his yajñas. In his yajñas he
competed with Indra. Śakra

5 Look at the ground, dotted with region,
innumerable yajña-altars.
The earth seems to be sinking under
Yayāti's good deeds ! karma

पश्य नानाविधाकारैः

ययातियज्ञकर्मभिः

6 Here is the marvellous *śamī*-
tree with just one
leaf. Here is the lake of Rāma Paraśurāma
and Nārāyaṇa's āśrama.

7 This is the path traversed by Paraśurāma,
the radiantly powerful
son of Ṛcika when he practised Yoga
on the Raupyā's banks.

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa ['II : 129 / 8 - 14] 39

O descendant of the Kaurava clan!

8 ~~Listen to what~~ a Piśāca woman, wearing pestles as ornaments, once said to me as I was reciting the genealogies :

अत्र अनुवंशं पठतः श्रृणु

9 "Eat the curd of Yugandhara !
Stay in Acyutasthala !
Bathe in Bhūtalaya !
And live with your sons !

युगन्धरे दधि प्राश्य
उषित्वा चाच्युतस्थले।
तद्वद् भूतलये स्नात्वा
सपुत्रा वस्तुमर्हसि ॥

1) Yugandharans made curd out of the milk of camels and asses — forbidden.
2) Acyutasthala is a place where mixed castes lived — forbidden.
3) Bhūtalaya was near a river where its residents — robbers and things — threw dead bodies — forbidden to bathe there.

!

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भरतसत्तम कौन्तेय

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द्वारमेतत् कुरुक्षेत्रस्य

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मुदमभ्यगात्

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नाकपृष्ठस्य द्वारम्

n say

आहुः मनीषिणः

rasvata.

O rājā! Rāje

15 ~~King~~ Bharata performed yajñas here. For the Horse-Sacrifice he released the horse meant for sacrifice, हयमेधेन

16 Marked with black stripes. He ruled the earth with the power of dharma. Here Maruta, protected by Saṃvarta, कृष्णसारङ्गं

17 Performed excellent yajñas. O tiger-among-men, To bathe here is to attain all the realms, to be purified of all crimes. ~~all sins.~~ So bathe here, O Indra-among-rājās. पुरुषव्याघ्र दुष्कृता: राजेन्द्र

18 Urged and praised by the mahā-ṛṣis,

The eldest

maśa :

ɔower

ce the finest of Pāṇḍavas —

ι!"

.omaśa,

O mahā-muscled hero!

vatī,

with adoring pilgrims.

* सर्वाँल्लोकान् प्रपश्यामि
तपसा सत्यविक्रम ।
इहस्थ: पाण्डवश्रेष्ठं
पश्यामि श्वेतवाहनम् ॥

21 O finest-of-men! Bathing in it will free you of all crimes. ~~sins.~~ The ṛṣis, divine ṛṣis and royal ṛṣis all performed the Sārasvata here. नरश्रेष्ठ यत्र स्नात्वा नरश्रेष्ठ धूतपाप्मा भविष्यसि

22 This is the altar of Prajāpati — five yojanas long on all sides — this is the field of the mahā-ātman-ed King ~~all mahātmā~~ Kuru." वेदी प्रजापतेरेषा समन्तात् पञ्चयोजना

SECTION 130

1 If men die here (Lomaśa said),
they go straight to heaven.
Thousands come here in order
to pass their last days.

2 In the distant past Dakṣa
pronounced a blessing
here during a yajña : *To die here*
is to find heaven.

3 Here is the divine, profusely
watery river Sarasvatī,
and here is the *tirtha* of Sarsvatī
called Vinaśana.

4 Here is the gate of the Niṣadha
kingdom ; because she disliked
the Niṣadhas, the Sarasvatī hid
herself here from them.

5 Here also is the Camasodbheda,
where the Sarasvatī
reappeared, and was joined by
other ocean-seeking rivers.

6 Foe-chastiser, here is the sacred
tirtha spot called Sindhu,
where Lopāmudrā took the ṛsi
Agastya as husband.

7 Sun-radiant hero, here is the
tirtha called Prabhāsa —
a sacred, sin-cancelling, favourite
haunt of Indra.

O Bharata descendant! — continued

मर्तुकामा नराः

इह ये वै मरिष्यन्ति
ते वै स्वर्गजितो नराः

on chanting,

रम्या दिव्या चौघवती

O lord of the earth,

विशाम्पते

सर्वाः पुन्याः समुद्रगाः

sacred

भास्करद्युते

crime-

पुण्यं पवित्रं पापनाशन

of their mother, weaken, I will
carry them too."

18 "Bhīma," said Yudhiṣṭhira, "be stronger still
for speaking so. You volunteer
to carry the princess

19 And also the twins. May
you prosper ! Few have
your courage. May your strength,
virtue and fame grow.

20 Mighty-armed hero, because
you have undertaken
to carry our twin brothers and wife,
may you never falter !"

21 The enchanting lady Draupadī
smiled and said,
"Noble Bharata, I am ready ;
do not worry for me."

22 "Son of Kuntī," said Lomaśa,
"it is possible to go
to Gandhamādana by tapasyā ;
let us practise penance.

23 I am certain, Kuntī's son,
that you, Nakula,
Sahadeva, Bhīma and I will
then see Arjuna."

24 Talking among themselves, they
saw with delight
the kingdom of Subāhu, full
of horses and elephants,

25 Thickly populated by the
Kirātas and Taṅganas,
as well as the Kulindas,
and visited by the gods.

26 Subāhu, king of the Pulindas,
welcomed them joyfully
and accorded them great honour
as they entered his kingdom ;
pleased with their reception,
they stayed there happily,

27 Before leaving for the Himālayas
where the sun shone
radiant in the sky. And leaving
Indrasena, their servants

28 And cooks, all the valuable
possessions of Draupadī,
and everything else, in the safekeeping
of the king, the chariot-heroes,

29 Great warrior-descendants of Kuru,
continued their journey.
They moved with caution ; they had
high hopes of seeing Arjuna.

SECTION 141

"Bhīma, princess of Pāñcāla,
twins," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"listen to me. ~~Strong is karma !~~
We've become forest-wanderers.

2 We are tired and distressed ;
yet we must go on
as best as we can in the hope
that we will see Arjuna.

MAHABHARATA VOL 54 MAY 1973

ॐ The Mahābhārata

IN THIS FASCICULE

In these sections *[142 to 145]* the detailed description of the various *tīrthas* visited by Yudhiṣṭhira continues. Bhīm goes to collect the blue lotus desired by Draupadī and meets Hanumān (Section *146*).

दृष्टाः पर्वताः सर्वे नद्यः *
सपुरकाननाः।
तीर्थानि चैव श्रीमान्ति
स्पृष्टं च सलिलं करैः॥

एषा शिवजला पुण्या #
याति सौम्य महानदी।
बदरीप्रभवा राजन्
देवर्षिगणसेविता॥

The Mahābhārata

The Tīrtha-yātrā Parva in the Vana Parva

SECTION 142

1 "You have seen (Lomaśa continued)
mountains, rivers, cities,
forests, and lovely *tīrthas* whose holy
waters you have touched.

2 Sons of Pāṇḍu, this is the way
Mandara mountain :
be on the alert and free your
minds of all worries.

3 For this is the abode of the
gods, and of all
the divine ṛṣis famed for
their virtuous deeds.

4 In this region flows the mighty
river of enchantment,
whose sacred ṛṣi-adored waters
originate near the *badarī* tree.

11 The soft hands and lotus-feet
of this lady, deserving
the finest cosmetics, are dark-blue
today — all my fault!

12 My obsession with dice is the
cause of all this!
I am reduced to seeing her in
an animal-infested forest!

13 King Drupada bestowed on us
his large-eyed daughter,
hoping she would find happiness
with her Pāṇḍava husbands.

14 And now, broken down with the
rigours of sorrow and
travel — all my fault! — she lies
unhappy on the ground."

15 While Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
lamented in this fashion,
Dhaumya and other celebrated Brahmins
came beside him.

16 They consoled him and they blessed
him, uttering *mantras*
capable of destroying rākṣasas, and
performed various rites.

17 After *mantras* had been chanted
by the great ṛṣis in order
to revive her, and the cool caresses
of the Pāṇḍava's hands,

18 After she had been fanned by
the water-filled breeze,
the Pāñcāla princess, refreshed,
returned to her senses.

(*) तपस्विनी

108 lakṣaṇas in "great ones" — 76 anuvyañjana, 32 mahā-vyañjana

wheel or lotus or discus on the palms or soles of the feet are auspicious signs

23 ...ṛṣṇā-Draupadī ...less ...d ... रक्ततलौ पादौ ...by पूजितलक्षणौ (*)

all the auspicious signs.

21 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira made special efforts to console her.
Having done so, the foremost ~~Kuru~~ of the Kauravas said to Bhīma : कुरुश्रेष्ठ

22 "Bhīma, ahead of us lie many snow-topped, precipitous mountains. ~~Great hero~~, O mahā-muscled one, how will ~~Kṛṣṇā~~ Draupadī manage ?" हिमदुर्गमा:

23 "~~King~~ Mahā-rāja," replied Bhīma, ~~"I will~~ "O bull-brave Bhārata! It will be my duty to carry the princess, the twins, and you ; so do not worry, O Indra-among-rājās. भरतर्षभ

24 O defectless ~~Sinless~~ one, if you order it, the son of Hiḍimbā, sky-ranging Ghaṭotkaca, ~~strong~~ as mahā-valiant as me, will carry us all."

25 Ordered by Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma mentally summoned his rākṣasa son ; immediately Dharmatmā Ghaṭotkaca appeared. स्स्मार स्मृतमात्र

26 The ~~mighty-armed~~ mahā-powerful hero greeted the Pāṇḍavas and Brahmins, and did *añjali* before them ; they welcomed him warmly.

31 Study of the Vedas, trade and
commerce, maintenance
of law and order — are the main
professions of people.

32 If people refuse dharma in their
lives, if the Vedas are
not studied, government neglected,
the world is ruined.

33 If the respective professions are
not properly cultivated,
everything collapses ; if cultivated,
dharma prospers.

34 The dharma of the twice-born is
what constitutes non-death ;
it has a threefold manifestation :
yajña, study, gift-giving.

35 Performing yajñas, teaching, and
accepting gifts — are
for Brahmins ; the Kṣatriya protects ;
the Vaiśya tends cattle.

36 It is said that the Śūdra's dharma
is to serve the twice-
born. He cannot beg alms, perform
homas, or observe
religious vows. He must live in
his guru's house.

37 Son of Kuntī, your dharma is that
of a Kṣatriya,
to protect others. Discipline yourself,
and do your duty.

38 That king rules best who takes
the counsel of wise

men, and is assisted by honest
and competent ministers.
The king who rules selfishly
invites works his own ruin.

39 It is only when a king confers
honour and favour
where these are due, that the world
moves towards progress.

तदा भवन्ति लोकस्य मर्यादाः सुव्यवस्थिताः

40 It is essential that the secrets
of a hostile country —
her forts, the state of her allies —
be known through spies.

41 Secrecy, diplomacy, strength, punishment,
reward, and cleverness —
these are the ways to succeed.
And spies help here.

42 Also, singly or together, a king
should employ the
following — conciliation, gift-giving,
sabotage, and rebuke.

साम्ना दानेन भेदेन दण्डेन

43 Great Bharata, diplomacy is the
essence of politics ;
it never fails ; therefore, seek advice
from the twice-born.

मन्त्रमूला नयाः

44 In matters relating to secrecy,
a woman, a fool, a ...
..., a greedy man, an unstable man,
should not be consulted.

स्त्रिया मूढेन बालेन, लुब्धेन लघुना

45 Only the wise should be consulted,
and policy executed
through dependable officers. Avoid fools,
seek genuine friends.

मूर्खान् सर्वत्र वर्जयेत्

16 And the mountain shook and trees
began to topple.

20 "Shook loose by the commotion of
Garuda's wings,
these lovely five-coloured blossoms
seen by all of us

21 Are sweeping down on the river
Aśvarathā. In the
Khāndava forest your mahātmā brother,
true to his promise,

22 Routed the gandharvas, Nāgas, and
rākṣasas; even Indra
could not stop him; he killed Māyāvī
and obtained the Gāndiva.

23 You too, Bhīma, are as powerful
as Indra himself;
you have the same invincible spirit
and strength of arms.

O Bhīma!

24 Let the power of your great arms
drive out the terrified
rākṣasas from this mountain to
the ten directions,

25 So that your friends, free from
peril, can stand
unharmed on the auspicious flower-
filled mountain top.

चित्रमाल्यधरं
शिवं

26 Bhīma, I have wanted this
for a long time.
I want to be on the summit,
protected by you."

एवं प्रणिहितं
भीम चिरात्
प्रभृति मे मनः

27 Foe-chastising, ~~mighty-armed~~ mahā-muscled Bhīma
seemed to come still,
under a spell; he stood like a proud,
whip-tormented bull.

परंतप महाबाहु

28 Śrīmān Pāṇḍava Bhīma walked
like a lion
like a bull
He was handsome

सिंहर्षभगतिः
श्रीमानुदारः कनकप्रभः।
मनस्वी बलवान् दृप्तो
मानी शूरश्च पाण्डवः॥
लोहिताक्षः सिंहदंष्ट्रो
बृहत्स्कन्धः शालपोत

and the sun setting,
obscuring the cardinal points ;
and the Pāṇḍava heroes

11 Patiently waited
for the return of Arjuna,
the great chariot-warrior,
firm-willed and strict-vowed,
pursuer of dharma and
reciter of the Vedas.

12 They said, "Let all here
find joy in welcoming
skilled-in-weapons' Arjuna,"
and the sons of Kuntī
dedicated themselves
to the practice of Yoga.

13 Lovely were the forests
on that great mountain,
but constant thoughts of Arjuna
made every day and night
appear to the Pāṇḍavas
like an endless year.

14 From the time that Arjuna,
with Dhaumya's permission,
left with matted hair,
the Pāṇḍavas were joyless.
How could they be happy
with thoughts of him disturbing ?

15 Since the time that Arjuna,
with Yudhiṣṭhira's permission,
left the forest of Kāmyaka,
striding like an elephant,
the Pāṇḍavas were lost
in inconsolable grief.

16 In this way the Bharatas descendants
passed a difficult month
on that great mountain,
thinking of Arjuna,
who had gone to Indra Vāsava-
to learn weapons-lore.

17 After living five years in पञ्चवर्षाणि
the abode of सहस्राक्षनिवेशने
thousand-eyed Indra, and obtaining
all divine weapons —

18 Such as Agni, Varuṇa, Soma,
Vāyu, Viṣṇu,
Indra, Paśupati, Brahmā, Parameṣṭhin,
Prajāpati, Supreme Ruler

BRAHMĀ = 1. Bṛhaspati Great Lord 2. Ādi-Kavi, First Seer 3. Śāstṛ (Shaper) 4. Lokeśa 5. Parameṣṭhin 6. Sanat (Everlasting) 7. Dru-ghaṇa (Undivided impulse)

19 Yama, Dhātā, Savitā, Tvaṣṭā,
and Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera —
he paid homage to Śatakratu-Indra of
a hundred sacrifices,

20 And, after doing *pradakṣiṇā* around
him, Arjuna sought
Indra's permission and returned happily
to Gandhamādana.

SECTION 165

Vaiśampāyana continued :
Once while waiting for Arjuna, (the mahā-chariot-hero)
the Pāṇḍavas saw Indra's chariot,
dazzling like lightning,
suddenly arrive.

न त्वमद्य युधा जेतुं शक्यः सुरगणैरपि

even the gods will not now be able
to defeat you.

64 Your might now is incalculable and अप्रमेयो
invincible; among gods and anti-gods अप्रधृष्य
you have no equal in battle." Horripilating,
the deity added : अजेय संग्राम सुरासुरैः

65 "Because you are alert, dexterous,
truthful and self- सत्यवादी
disciplined, no one can compare with
you in combat, O hero.

66 You protect Brahmins, you are skilled
in arms, you are
brave, incomparable, O Kuru. You have now कुरुद्वह
fifteen weapons,

67 And five ways of using them ; you
have no equal, Pārtha-Arjuna. विद्यते न त्वया
You have learnt to shoot, retract, repeat- समः
shoot, repeat-retract ; Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,

68 You have learnt how to revive innocents
burnt in crossfire,
and repair the weapons damaged प्रायश्चित्त

प्रयोग = shoot

उपसंहार = retract

आवृत्ति = repeat-shoot
repeat-retract

प्रायश्चित्त = restore to life
innocents

प्रतीघात = repair
weapons

your finger. प्रतीघात

ell you गुर्वर्थकालोऽयं

f gods Indra

what विषह्यं यन्मया
Bala and कर्तुं कृतमेव
er of Vṛtra निबोध तत्

ब्रह्म

71 "There is nothing in the three worlds
you cannot accomplish.
My enemies — the anti-gods known as
the Nivātakavacas —

72 Have hidden themselves in forts in
the ocean's womb.
There are thirty million of them, all
equally lustrous.

73 Son of Kuntī, go and destroy them,
as your guru's fee."
I was provided that magnificent chariot
driven by Mātali,

74 And pulled by horses with manes as
lovely as peacock's
feathers. He placed upon my head
this shining crown,

75 And presented me with ornaments
to adorn my body,
along with this impregnable armour
so pleasing to the skin,

76 And he strung my Gāṇḍīva bow
with a special cord.
I climbed into the divine chariot,
and set out,

77 Knowing it was the same from which,
in the past, Indra
routed Vicocana's son Bali. The gods
roused by the noise,

78 Mistaking me for the chief god,
approached me.
They saw me and asked: "Phālguni,
what are your plans?"

16 He seemed to have lost his senses.
Fear overcame me
also; he recovered, however, and
said to me:

17 "Sinless one, in the distant past
a furious battle
was waged here between gods and anti-
gods over nectar.

18 In that unbelievably fierce war
that led to the death
of Śambara, I was the charioteer
of the king of gods.

19 I guided the horses when Vṛtra
met his doom,
I witnessed the ghastly clash
with Virocana's son.

20 Pāṇḍava, I have been personally
present at all these
encounters. Yet never before did I
lose consciousness.

21 It must be that Pitāmaha Brahmā
has ordained the
end of creation. Why this slaughter if not
for the world's doom?"

22 I heard Mātali, and tried to
bolster my own
self-confidence. I wondered how best to
combat this new māyā.

23 I said to terrified Mātali, 'Look
at the strength
of my arms, and of my weapons, and
of the Gāṇḍīva!

24 Charioteer, shed your fear, be calm.
I promise today
to pierce their darkness-māyā with
my anti-māyā weapons."

सूत स्थिरो भव

fearful

O lord of the men,

नराधिप

25 And immediately I countered their
great māyā with my
weapons meant for gods, capable of the benefit of the gods,
and capable of stupefying all creation.

मोहनीं सर्वभूतानां हिताय त्रिदिवौकसाम्

26 Their māyā being neutralised, some
of the best anti-gods,
who had incalculable prowess, again
produced fresh māyās,

असुरोत्तमा

पुनः प्रकाशमभवत्
तमसा ग्रस्यते पुनः।
भवति अदर्शनो लोकः
पुनरप्सु निमज्जति॥

d

, then vanished,

tself,

ting courses

संग्रामे लोमहर्षणे

29 The desperate Nivātakavacas rushed
headlong at me.
This was my chance; I sent them
to Yama's realm.

तानहं विवरं दृष्ट्वा प्राहिण्वं यमसादनम्

30 Then, it so happened that on the
furious battlefield
fatal to the anti-gods, I was unable
to see my enemies, the Dānava anti-gods.

Nivātakavacas

ब्रूहि किं कुर्वतः कर्म भवेद् गतिरुत्तमा

Sessim 145

Sessim 145
8 Sept 2002

 Gita p-1455

SECTION 181

वेदवेदाङ्ग पारग

1 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "You know the Vedas
and Vedāṅgas so well
that I want you to tell me what
karma ~~acts~~ leads to ~~heaven.~~ the ultimate goal."
O Bharata descendant!

2 The snake replied, "My view is that
charity to the deserving,
loving-speech, truthfulness, and non-violence
lead to heaven."

पात्रे दत्त्वा प्रियाण्युक्त्वा
सत्यमुक्त्वा च भारत।
अहिंसानिरतः स्वर्गं
गच्छेदिति मतिर्मम॥

udhiṣṭhira,

or to

on-violence,

benefit

There are times when truth-speaking is
superior to charity.
There are time when charity is preferable
to truth-speaking.

6 Lord of the earth, ~~finest of men,~~ O Indra-among rājās, राजेन्द्र
ahiṃsā is sometimes

महीपते

ometimes loving

दानं च सत्यं तत्त्वं वा
अहिंसा प्रियमेव च।
एषां कार्यगरीयस्त्वाद्
दृश्यते गुरुलाघवम्॥

n and कार्यपेक्षमनन्तरं

ons, ask ;

8 SEPTEMBER 2002

Professor P. Lal reads the advice given by Krishna to the Pandavas at the end of their forest-exile in the 145th weekly Sunday session of his English transcreation of the complete Mahabharata of Vyasa at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 8 September 2002 at 11 a.m.

and persistent pure.
activity takes one from the earth
to the realm of heaven.

11 The opposite gets one re-born as human
or as animal, O Indra-among-rajas!
It is specially mentioned in connection
with this subject,

12 That the man who gives to lust,
anger, violence and
greed falls from the human level
to the animal,

काम क्रोध हिंसा लोभ

13 And, it is said, can move up
from animal to human:
cows, horses and other animals can get
the status of deities. देवत्व

Tata! Child!

14 This is how a man's karma
determines his transmigration. Everything however
reposes in the Ātman, O king.

आत्मनभवस्थापयते नृप

Tata! Child!

15 The karma-fettered body-trapped
ātman, subject to
pleasure and pain, gets repeatedly born.
The free-from-karma-fruit ātman

जातो जातश्च

फलार्थस्तात निष्पृक्त:

2 birds sit on the golden bough

नद्यो वा स्थावराणि समं

5 Such a flood of rain fell that
one could not make plants and rivers
out the ups and downs ; all became
a level lake.

6 Summer was over ; and streams swollen
with frothing waters
whistled like arrows through the swift-flying
graceful forests.

7 Boars, stags, soaking wet,
sent out varied
cries that could be heard clearly
in the forest.

8 The peacocks, stotaka-birds, ~~cātakas~~, male kokilas
and gurgling frogs
were all caught up in intoxicated,
frolicking ecstasy.

9. While the Pāndavas roamed in sandy,
dry areas near mountains,
the happy cloud-thick monsoon
came and went,

10. Followed by autumn, season of
krauñca-cranes and hamsa-swans,
of green-carpeted forests, and
joyful streams.

ear autumn
~~[illegible]~~ ह्रीं न क्षत्रा
auspicious season

ह्रीं नारजसः

nets

13 They saw rivers and tanks with
cool water,
lovely with lily and lotus,
pleasing the eye.

14 They felt a great pleasure roaming
on the banks
of the sacred Sarasvatī — cane-covered,
sky-like banks.

15 Those expert wielders of the bow
were enchanted
seeing the pellucid waters of
the sacred Sarasvatī.

16 O Janamejaya, they spent the specially
sacred night of the
autumnal full moon in Kārtika in
the ashram.

17 In the company of the merit-laden,
noble ascetics, the Pāṇḍavas, finest of Bharatas,
devoted themselves to the practice
of the highest Yoga.

18 And when the dark fortnight began,
Pāṇḍu's sons, led by
Dhaumya, with charioteers and cooks,
set out for the Kāmyaka forest.

SECTION 183

O Kaurava Janamejaya (continued Vaiśampāyana)

1 Arriving in Kāmyaka forest Yudhisthira and the
welcomed by munis Pāṇḍavas
lived there with Draupadī Kṛṣṇā.

Dharma demands tapasyā, O rājā.
Truthfulness and honesty
have guided your sva-dharma,
so you have obtained
control of this world
as well as the next.

17 You studied the ~~Vedas~~ scriptures
in the approved manner;
you mastered all weapons; धनुर्वेदमवाप्य
you accumulated wealth क्षत्रेण धर्मेण वसूनि लब्ध्वा
by ~~a~~ Kṣatriya ~~should~~ dharma;
you performed all the rituals.

18 You eschew Kāma, ~~and~~ (you)
do not let ~~selfishness~~ sexual pleasure
determine your actions.
~~nor greed of wealth.~~ O Indra among men!
~~That is why you~~ You prefer Dharma to wealth.
So you are known as Dharmarāja.

न चार्थलोभात् प्रजहासि धर्मं तस्मात् प्रभावादसि धर्मराजः

19 In spite of your kingdom,
luxury and wealth,

village-dharma
ग्राम्य-धर्म = "sexual intercourse" (M. Williams — MHB: III) WOMANISING

Van Buitenen: ~~...~~ the laws of the rustics { Satvalekar: साधारन धर्म !

न ग्राम्यधर्मेषु रतिस्तवास्ति कामान् न किञ्चित् कुरुषे नरेन्द्र

wisdom, ...ce.

दान सत्य तप श्रद्धा बुद्धि क्षमा धृति

अपेतधर्मव्यवहारवृत्तं

21 It seems to me obvious
that you will regain असंशयं
the rule of your kingdom.

When your exile is over,
we will strive hard
to punish the Kurus."

22 The chief of the Dāśārhas
said to Dhaumya, Bhīma,
Yudhiṣṭhira, the twins,
and Draupadī : "How fortunate
that Arjuna has returned
with full mastery of weapons."

23 The lord of the Dāśārhas,
and his friends said to Draupadi :
"You are fortunate
in being reunited
with happy and healthy
Arjuna, your husband.

24 Daughter of Drupada,
yajña-born lady,
your sons are mild-mannered ;
they will study bowcraft,
and learn to their benefit
from noble examples.

25 Your father and brothers
have offered temptations
of kingdom and land,
but the boys are averse
to the luxuries of Drupada
and their maternal uncles.

26 And when they enter
the land of the Ānartas,
in pursuit of arms-lore
in the Vṛṣṇi capital,
they do not crave for
celestial delights.

28 *[III : 184 | 15 - 21] The P. Lāl Transcreation*

O lord of the earth!

15 Seeing the ṛṣi in front of them, महदाश्चर्यमिति

they ~~marvelled~~ were maha-surprised, महोपेत

and exclaimed, "This cannot be.

It is incredible.

स्वधर्मम्
अनुतिष्ठाम:
तस्मान्मृत्युभयं न न:

can the dead come back मृतो कथं

to life? Is it

power of tapasyā that has जीवितम्

restored his life?

twice-born one,
~~Brahmin~~, we want to know,

if you will tell us." → श्रोतुमिच्छामहे

replied, "Death has no power न अस्माकं

over us, O kings. → मृत्यु: प्रभावते नृपा:

18 Let me explain to you, ~~sirs~~,

briefly and logically,

why Death is unable to have

power over us. We follow our sva-dharma.

So we do not fear death.

19 We are men of pure conduct, not शुद्धाचारा

given to laziness, अनलसा:

we perform saṃdhyā worship, eat

purely, live purely. संध्योपासनतत्परा:

20 We first feed our guests with अतिथीनन्नपानेन

food and drink,

then our dependents; we eat the leftovers —

we ~~don't~~ do not fear death. → तस्मान् मृत्युभयं न न:

21 We are peaceable, charitable, forgiving,

we visit *tīrthas*,

and live in sacred spots; so we

do not fear death.

We associate only with good men, so

we ~~don't~~ do not fear death.

शान्ता दान्ता क्षमा शीलास्तीर्थदानपरायण:

22 This is only a brief account.
Give up vanity,
and return to your kingdoms. No sin will touch you."

23 Best of the Bharatas (Mārkaṇḍeya
said), the kings
offered pūjā to the great ascetic
and returned happy.

SECTION 185

1 Now I will tell you more about
Brahmin glory (said Mārkaṇḍeya). The royal ṛṣi Vainya
began a horse-sacrifice.

2 Atri desired to go to Vainya for
alms, but dharma
persuaded him to give up his
hankering for riches.

3 After deep thought, he decided to
go to the forest.
He called his wife and sons,
and said to them :

4 "May your minds be directed soon
to the forest,
for we shall attain serene fulfilment
of our desires."

5 His wife, motivated by a high
sense of dharma,
replied, "Why not ask wealth from
mahātmā Vainya ?

MAHABHARATA VOL 60 NOVEMBER 1973

The Mahābhārata

IN THIS FASCICULE

Mārkaṇḍeya describes the signs of the different yugas *[188-189]* of the past, and the Kali-yuga of the present *[190]*, leading to the arrival of Kalki-avatāra *[191]*.

MARKANDEYA

Brahmā's son, Bhrgu by his wife Khyāti had 2 sons, Dhātā and Vidhātā, who married Āyati and Niyati. Niyati's son was Mṛkaṇḍu, whose son was Mārkaṇḍeya.

Śiva asked Mṛkaṇḍu if he wanted a stupid + wicked long lived son or a virtuous son who would live for only 16 years. Mṛkaṇḍu tells Mārkaṇḍeya aged 15 that he will die a year later. Mārkaṇḍeya does tapasyā. Yama's attendants are unable to come near the radiant boy, so Yama comes personally. Mārkaṇḍeya embraces Śiva's image, Yama's noose falls on image + boy. Śiva kills Yama to save the child. At gods' request, Śiva gives life to Yama; Mārkaṇḍeya will be forever sixteen. Śiva is known as Mṛtyuñjaya + Kālakāla.

The Mahābhārata

147
Session 147
22 Sept 2002
Gita
p. 1481

The Mārkaṇḍeya-samāsyā Parva in the Vana Parva

SECTION 188

1 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira (Vaiśampāyana continued) turned
to the illustrious Mārkaṇḍeya and
asked him humbly : → यशस्विनम्
2 O mahā-muni "Great ascetic, you have witnessed पप्रच्छ विनयोपेतो

22 SEPTEMBER 2002

नम्

Professor P. Lal reads rishi Markandeya's description of the signs of the four yugas, and his mystical journey through the child Krishna's body, in the 147th weekly Sunday session of his English transcreation of the complete Mahabharata of Vyasa at S. D. Birla Sabhagar on 22 September 2002 at 11 a.m.

→ यद्येष पुरुषो वेद देवा अपि न तं विदुः

Gita Press (वेदा)

Vision-delighting Mahā-inscrutable
Immaculate One.

20 Without beginning
without end
Unchangeable
Undeteriorating
World-Pervader
Creator of all
Himself uncreated
Source of all power.

अनादि निधनं भूतं
विश्वमव्ययम क्षारम् ।
एष कर्ता च क्रियते
कारणं चापि पौरुषे ॥

21 ~~His wisdom exceeds~~
~~the wisdom of all the gods.~~ Even the gods cannot know him
who knows them. universal

राजसत्तम O Excellent ~~king~~ rāja, after the ~~pralaya~~-dissolution,
this magnificent creation

22 Is again re-created.
O tiger-among-men! The Kṛta-yuga, it is said,
consists of four thousand god-years,

मनुज व्याघ्र

23 Its dawn and evening twilight being samdhyā
four hundred god-years each.
The Tretā-yuga
has three thousand god-years,

...hyā being

in his 51st year ; then MAHA-PRALAYA.

1 god-year = 360 solar years

	SOLAR YEARS
Krita yuga samdhyas + krita yuga	= 1,728,000
Treta yuga	= 1,296,000
Dvāpara	= 864,000
Kali	= 432,000
	4,320,000

...hyā
...h.

...ā being

...yās
...ation.

BRAHMA lives for 100 years; present Brahma is

4 YUGAS = MAHA YUGA = MANVANTARA
1000 MAHAYUGAS = ARDHA-KALPA
1 KALPA = one night + day of Brahmā

Nostradamus predictions!!

27 When the Kali-yuga is over,
the Kṛta recommences ;
the yugas together comprise a cycle
of twelve thousand god-years.

28 A thousand of these cycles
makes one day of Brahmā.
When the universe
is retracted into Brahmā's home, (the being, the is-ness) ब्रह्मभवने

O tiger-among-men, मनुजव्याघ्र
29 The disappearance of phenomena
is described by the learned as
pralaya-dissolution.
O bull-brave Bharata ~~Great Bharata~~, towards the end युगान्ते

भरतर्षभ
30 ~~Of the last yuga of~~
a thousand god-years,
men start lying, O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
they offer proxy gifts and yajñas, → यज्ञप्रतिनिधिः

31 As well as proxy vows. दानप्रतिनिधिः
Brahmins take on Śūdra activities, व्रतप्रतिनिधिः
शूद्रा धनार्जकाः Śūdras start accumulating wealth,

32 And Kṣatriyas adopt Brahmin-dharma.
Brahmins abstain from yajñas and learning,
give up staff and deer-skin → दण्ड अजिन वर्जिताः

33 In the Kali-yuga, and
eat everything without discrimination. — सर्वभक्षाः
Tāta! My child! They give up whispered prayers,
and Śūdras take them up. → अजापा जापपरायणाः

O lord of men! मनुजाधिप:
34 When the life of the world
becomes muddled in this way,
destruction is at hand.
rājās Mleccha ~~kings~~ will rule at that time.

35 These ~~sinful~~ wicked kings, slaves of falsehood, पापा मृषावादपरायणाः
~~will~~ govern by falsehood. मृषानुशासिनः
The Āndhrās, Śakas, Pulindas, Yavanas,

43 Fathers will not forgive sons,
nor sons fathers ;
and wives no longer ~~be faithful~~
to their husbands.

44 At the time of yuga-end, men
will seek out
countries where barley and wheat
are staple foods.

45 Men and women will be absolutely
free — so free
that they will not even tolerate
each other's ~~actions~~

46 The world will be barbarised.
Men will refuse
to gratify the gods by offerings
of *śrāddha.*

47 No one will listen to anyone,
no one will
be anyone's guru. Terrible anarchy
will result.

48 ~~Men~~ will live an average of
sixteen years.
As soon as they reach that figure,
they will die.

49 Girls of five and six will give
birth to babies,
and boys of seven and eight
will become fathers.

50 At the time of yuga-end, wives
will be unhappy
with husbands, and husbands unhappy
with their wives.

51 At the time of the yuga's dissolution,
wealth will decrease,
men pretend to be good, envy will flourish
and charity decrease.

52 At yuga-end, markets
will be everywhere, streets
overflow with sellers of virtue.
O rājā! Women will discard
modesty, and let their hair fall free.

53 At that time, men will turn into
mlecchas ; they will
eat anything ; they will follow
no restrictions.

54 Best of the Bharatas, at the time
of yuga-end,
cheating in buying and selling
will be common.

55 At yuga-end, men will perform
rituals and ceremonies
without knowing their significance, interpreting
as they like.

56 At the time of yuga-dissolution,
headstrong men
will be ruthless to each other —
and vindictive.

57 People will heartlessly cut down
trees and gardens.
Men will not know where to earn
their livelihood.

58 Lured by greed, O great king,
men will murder
Brahmins to seize and enjoy
their wealth.

48 *[III : 191 / 7 - 14] The P. Lāl Transcreation*

:O Bharata descendant!

7 When the Kṛta-yuga re-commences,
adharma will
be replaced by Dharma, and men will
re-start religious rituals.

अधर्मविनाशो च धर्मवृद्धिश्च

क्रियावान्

8 Gardens, yajña-grounds, large tanks,
educational establishments,
ponds and ~~temples~~ god-houses will re-appear,
as will sacred rites .

देवतायतन

9 Of yajñas, in the Kṛta-yuga.
Brahmins will all
be honest and well-meaning ~~ascetics~~ munis
who practise tapasyā.

10 Ashrams occupied by scoundrels will
return to the hands
of truth-loving men. Seeds sown will
begin to ~~grow~~ sprout richly.

आश्रम हतपाखण्डाः सत्यरताः प्रजाः

11 Multiple crops will grow in all
seasons. Human
beings will devote themselves to charity,
vow-discipline, and ~~ritual~~ order.

दान व्रत नियम

12 Yajña-and-meditation-devoted Brahmins
will be motivated
towards Dharma and happiness. ~~Kings~~ Rajas will
govern with Dharma.

the Kṛta-yuga, Vaiśyas will trade,
Brahmins pursue
eir six duties, and Kṣatriyas perform
deeds of valour.

dras will dedicate themselves to
the service of the
ier three castes. This will be the dharma of the Kṛta, Treta,
and Dvāpara yugas.

Six Brahmin duties:
1) यजन = learning knowledge of ritual
2) याजन = performance of ritual
3) अध्ययन
4) अध्यापन studying + teaching
5) दान = gift giving
6) प्रतिग्रह gift receiving

15 Pāṇḍu's son, I have given you a
comprehensive account
of the time-spans of different yugas as
is commonly known.

16 I have told you everything about
past and future
as narrated by Vāyu in his own
ṛṣi-adored Purāṇa.

17 Because I am long-lived, I have seen
many world-cycles.
I have told you all that I have
seen and felt.

18 Undeteriorating one, listen, with your
brothers, to what
I now have to clear your doubts
about Dharma.

ıa, always

ins happiness

20 Sinless one, listen to my beneficial
message — never insult
a Brahmin — an angered Brahmin can destroy
the three worlds.

21 The excellent Kurus (Vaiśampāyana
said) heard this,
and the intelligent and illustrious
Yudhiṣṭhira asked :

22 Ṛṣi, what must I do if I
wish to protect
my subjects? How should I behave
by my dharma ?"

SECTION 194

1 The Pāṇḍavas said to Mārkaṇḍeya :

2 "You have presented to us the glory of Brahmins. We would now like to hear about the glory of the Kṣatriyas." The mahā-ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya said to them : I will expound the glory of the Kṣatriyas. A king of the Kuru dynasty called Suhotra went to meet some great ṛṣis ; on his way back he chanced on king Śibi, son of Uśīnara. They greeted each other formally, as befitting each other's age. But each considered himself more talented than the other, and neither would permit right of way. Nārada happened to come along : "Why are you two blocking each other's way ?"

3 They said to Nārada : "Noble one, don't say that. The handers of tradition have declared that right of way should go to the superior or abler person. We block each other because we are exactly equal. A careful assessment will show neither superior nor inferior in any way." Nārada chanted the following ślokas :

4 "Cruel is cruel to humble,
Humble is humble to proud ;
Honest is honest to dishonest —
So why not honest to honest ?

5 Honest considers kindness
Hundred times greater than it is.
The gods have this custom.
Uśīnara's son undoubtedly
Has more goodness than you.

6 Conquer smallness by largeness,
Untruth by truth,
Wickedness by forgiveness,
Cruelty by kindness.

7 Both of you are generous-minded. Let one step aside, as advised in the ślokas." Nārada said this, and stood silent. The Kuru descendant walked around Śibi, praising his noble feats, gave him right of way, and proceeded to his destination.

8 In this way Nārada has praised the glory of the Kṣatriyas.

SECTION 195

1 Mārkaṇḍeya said: Here is another story. One day king Yayāti, Nahuṣa's son, was sitting on his throne surrounded by an assembly of citizens, when a Brahmin arrived for wealth to give to his guru. He said: "Your majesty, I come here to beg for the wealth that I pledged to my guru."

2 The king asked: "Noble one, tell me: what did you promise?"

3 The Brahmin replied:

"In this world when a man
asks for alms, he is hated.
I ask you, your majesty,
tell me how you feel
about my asking for alms
to give to my guru."

4 "When I give something,
I do not boast,"
said the king to the Brahmin.
"I listen to demands
that I can meet.
When I give, I am happy.

32

Is sure to escape all calamity ;
he will get heaven.
The donor of land to a highly
learned Brahmin

33

Finds fulfilment of all desires.
A tired traveller,
weak-limbed, dust-smeared, enquires
about a food-giver.

34

Some volunteer the information ; those
who tell the tired
traveller the names of the givers
of food,

36

No merit is greater than to give
wholesome, well-cooked
food to Brahmins, in accordance
with one's capacity.

37

Such an act gets a man the
friendship of Prajāpati.
Nothing excels a food-gift. Food is
first and foremost.

38

It is said food is Prajāpati.
Prajāpati is the
Year ; the Year is Yajña ; the source
of all is Yajña.

39

From Yajña emerges all moving
and unmoving life ;
therefore, food is first and foremost.
So have we heard.

40 The donors of lakes,
tanks, wells, and ponds,
the donors of food
and sweet-worded shelter, Kindness, मधुरा वाणी
have never to fear
the fury of Yama.

अन्नदाः प्रथमं यान्ति सत्यवाक् तदनन्तरं
अयाचितप्रदाता च समं यान्ति त्रयो जनाः nins, सुशीले

धारां वसुनां

42 The food-giver walks first ; then
comes the truth-
speaker ; then the giver to one
who has not asked.
All these three givers, however, reach
the same goal."

43 Yudhiṣṭhira, eager to learn, along
with his brothers,
again questioned the ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya mahā-ātmanes/
(continued Vaiśampāyana) :

44 "Mighty ascetic, Mahā-muni, how far is the
realm of Yama
from the region of men ? What
are its measurements ?
How does one cross it ? Tell me
all these details."

45 "Best among men of dharma," धर्मभृतां वर
said Mārkaṇḍeya,
"that is a great mystery, a
sacred mystery, Ovṛja, सर्वगुह्यतमं
which ṛṣis ponder and praise.
Let me explain it. प्रश्नं

अतिपुण्यानि पापानि

महतो भयात् ← greatest fear. Only they can wisely observe and analyse
observe human nature, its merits and defects. –
99 O bull-brave Excellent Brahmin, I have told you द्विजर्षभ
all about character
and knowledge, such as I know and as
I have heard." यथाप्रज्ञम् यथाश्रुतम्

SECTION 208

O Yudhishthira!
1 The dharma-rich meat-seller said
to the Brahmin
(continued Mārkaṇḍeya), "My profession is
truly is a gory one.
O Brahmin, कर्म घोरमेतद संशयम्

विधिस्तु बलवान् ब्रह्मन् दुस्तरं हि पुरा कृतम् ।
पुरा कृतस्य पापस्य
कर्मदोषो भवत्ययम् ॥ his विधिना हि हते
suffering. Fate is
the advance killer — the executioner पूर्वं निमित्तं
is only an agent. → घातको भवेत् ।

4 And we are only agents as a result
of our karma.
O twice-born one, for animals to get that are slaughtered,
and their the meat sold, —
That is also dharma —
5 Also produce karma, because the gods,
guests and servants
relish and the pitṛs are gratified by offered pūjā
with this delicious food.

6 The śrutis say that herbs, vegetables,
deer, birds and
wild animals are the ordained food
of all creatures.

तेषामपि भवेद् धर्म उपयोगेन भक्षणात् ।
देवतातिथि भृत्यानां पितॄणां प्रतिपूजनात् ॥ (Critical Edition)

7 Uśīnara's son Śibi, a king of
great fortitude,
obtained difficult-to-obtain heaven by giving his flesh.

omitted in Sita Press ed. slokas 8 - 16

8 O Brahmin, in the distant past,
two thousand animals
were killed daily to supply the kitchen
of king Rantideva.

9 He also ordered two thousand cows
slaughtered daily.
Rantideva daily distributed food
mixed with meat.

10 O Excellent Brahmin, that king obtained
enormous fame.
For the four-monthly rituals, animals
have to be killed.

Sita Press

मैं जिन मारे गये प्राणियों का मांस बेचता हूं, उनके जीते-जी यदि उनका सदुपयोग किया जाता, तो बड़ा धर्म होता। मांस-भक्षण में तो धर्म का नाम भी नहीं है। देवता, अतिथि, भरणीय कुटुम्बी-जन और पितरों का पूजन अवश्य धर्म है।

ınd

ıys killed

se Brahmins

f flesh-food

: the food

garding meat-eating

irst offering

r guilt

सन दुष्यति

by eating it.'

Gita Press ed.

तेषामपि भवेद् धर्म उपयोगे न भक्षणे ।
देवतातिथि भृत्यानां पितृणां चापि पूजनम् ॥

kills many forms of life. What
do *you* think ?

30 The earth and ~~the sky~~ ākāśa-space are filled सर्वमाकाशं
with subtle forms
of life which men unknowingly kill. पृथिवी तथा
What do *you* think ?

31 ~~When~~ Those who made the law 'Do not kill'
~~and was~~ proclaimed ahimsā
in the past, ~~people did not~~ must have been
~~know the facts~~ very confused people.

अहिंसेति यदुक्तं हि पुरुषैर्विस्मितैः पुरा

32 How is it possible to live
and not kill ?
I have thought deeply, and I
know at last
that there is no man living
who has not killed.

बहुसंचिंत्य इति वै नास्ति कश्चिदहिंसकः

यतयः 33 Even the ~~rsis~~ ascetics who vow ahimsā
are guilty.
Because they take great care, they
kill less.

अल्पतरा

34 Noble men of ~~remarkable fame~~ mahā-guṇas
do ~~openly~~ brazenly
criminal acts, and are not even
ashamed of them.

महाघोराणि कर्माणि

35 35. Friends do not like
their friends prospering;
and enemies do not like
their enemies prospering.

~~raised~~

36 ~~............not~~ please ~~friends,~~ in spite
of trying hard.
Self-appointed ~~Best~~ pundits are always finding fault
with their gurus.

गुरूंश्चैव विनिन्दन्ति मूढा पण्डितमानिनः

बहु लोके विपर्यस्त दृश्यते द्विजसत्तम

37 Such is the topsy-turvy nature
of the world. O excellent
Brahmin, what do you think of this tangle
of dharma and adharma ?

धर्मयुक्ताधर्म

38 Much can be said, on both sides,
on dharma and
adharma. Who follows his sva-karma

वक्तुं बहुविधं शक्यं धर्माधर्मेषु कर्मसु।
स्वकर्मनिरतो यो हि स यशः
प्राप्नुयान्महत् ॥

सर्वधर्मभृतां

209

O Yudhishthira!

ller said,
in skilful speech,
to the excellent Brahmin (continued
Mārkaṇḍeya) this :

निपुणं

यत् करोति अशुभं कर्म शुभं वा यदि sion
अवश्यं तत् समाप्नोति सत्तम e subtle,
पुरुषो नात्र संशयः॥ ng.

सूक्ष्मा धर्मस्य बहुशाखा ह्यनन्तिका

3 When life is at stake, and in the
matter of marriage,
untruth is permissible. Sometimes, Then
by an untruth
becomes one strengthens truth, and by truth
becomes strengthens untruth.

4 Look how complicated Dharma is ! —
It is often manipulated
because the greatest good of all is
held out as Truth.

5 There is no doubt, excellent one,
that a man
must reap the fruits of his good
or bad deeds.

प्राणान्तिके विवाहे च वक्तव्यमनृतं भवेत् ।
अनृतेन भवेत सत्यं सत्येनैवानृतं भवेत् ॥

[III : 210 / 5 - 12] The P. Lāl Transcreation

5 When obsession, acquisitiveness and
envy take hold,
Dharma is forgotten ; only mock-Dharma
is practised.

6 Practising mock-Dharma, they are content
to acquire wealth
by dishonest means. This was their
intention all along,

7 Their wealth-satiated mind gets more
and more corrupted.
When learned men and friends try
to dissuade them,

8 They come forward with weak and
unconvincing excuses.
Their attachment to adharma breeds
three kinds of evils :

9 They think sin, they speak sin,
they act sin.
Their persistent adharma destroys
all good qualities.

10 They form friendships with evilly-
inclined types,
and so they suffer in this world
and in the next.

11 All sinful men are of this kind.
The man of Dharma,
however, sees with wisdom and is able
to discriminate

12 "Between happiness and misery. He is
respectful to good
men. By practising goodness himself,
he follows Dharma."

13 "Your clarification of Dharma," said
the Brahmin, "cannot
be bettered. You have divine power ;
you must be a ṛṣi."

14 The meat-seller replied : "Brahmins deserve
the respect pitṛs get.
They get the first food-offering ; wise men
try to please them.

15 Excellent Brahmin, after this namaskāra
to Brahmins, I
will discourse on what pleases them.
Here is Brahma-knowledge :

16 The universe
The extraordinary universe
filled with the elements
Is Brahma.
Nothing else exisits.

17 Sky
Air
Fire
Water
Earth
Are the elements.
Sound
Touch
Form
Rasa
Smell
Are their characteristics.

18 These have their own special
properties related
to each other. Fire has sound,
touch, and form ;
water has sound, touch, form,

17 Above the navel is the region
of undigested food ;
below it, digested food. All breaths
centre in the navel.

18 Arteries spread from the heart upwards,
downwards, and in
all directions. With the help
of the ten breaths,
they carry food-energy to all
parts of the body.

19 This is how yogis go to the
supreme state,
after self-control, patience, and focusing
mind on ātman.
In-breath and out-breath are present
in all creatures.

20 Transformed into inner heat, in-breath
is the ātman.
Regarding the ātman, know this ;
it is hidden
by the eleven sense-forms and their
sixteen ramifications.

21 It is eternal but, like fire purifying
itself in an
oven, it is modified by the physical
sense-structure.

22 Like a water-drop rolling off
a lotus-leaf, it
rolls off the body. It is the knowledge-
field yoga achieves.

23 Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas are the
constituents of self.
Self reflects the ātman ; ātman reflects
the Supreme Ātman.

"The World is charged with the grandeur of God. It will shake forth like lightning from shook foil." "... miss the many-splendoured thing."

24 Insensible matter

एषं सर्वेषु भूतेषु भूतात्मा सम्प्रकाशते ।
दृश्यते त्वग्र्यया बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया ज्ञानवेदिभिः ॥

25 The universal Ātman ~~is hidden~~ shines
in the universe.
The truly learned see it with
the help of subtle wisdom.

26 With the grace of consciousness, चित्तस्य प्रसादेन
man destroys
good and bad karma, ~~achieving~~ कर्म शुभाशुभम्
the felicity of the ātman. प्रसन्नात्माऽऽत्मनि

27 This grace-filled state can be compared लक्षणं प्रसादस्य
to a fulfilled
man sleeping peacefully, or a ~~well-~~
~~trimmed~~ lamp shining in a windless spot. #

28 Eating ~~light~~ little, meditating early evening
and early morning,
a man sees the pure Ātman ~~reflected~~ विशुद्धात्मा
in his own ātman. → पश्यन्नात्मानमात्मनि

लक्षणं तु प्रसादस्य यथा तृप्तः सुखं स्वपेत् man
निवाते वा यथा दीपो दीप्येत् कुशलदीपितः ॥ #

30 Anger and greed are to be crushed क्रोध लोभ
by all means.
This constitutes the pure tapasyā ~~that~~
ferries a man ~~over~~ across.

31 Protect your tapasyā against anger,
dharma against selfishness and ill-will,

नित्यं क्रोधात् तपो रक्षेद् धर्मं रक्षेच्च मत्सरात् ।
विद्यां मानापमानाभ्यां आत्मानं तु प्रमादतः ॥

ill-will, learning against pride, ātman
against neglect.

32 Non-cruelty
is the greatest dharma,
Forgiveness
is the greatest strength,
Ātman-wisdom
is the greatest knowledge,
Truth
is the greatest vow.

33 Excellent
is the speaking of Truth,
Excellent
is knowledge of the Truth,
The greatest good
of creatures is the greatest Truth.

34 The man who works without hope
of reward, who has
renounced all — he is the real renouncer,
the really wise man.

35 Even gurus cannot provide communion
with Brahman,
they can only guide. The true yoga
is renunciation.

36 Do not injure life ; live in harmony
with all things.
There is no use brooding on revenge
in this life.

37 Self-effacement, peace of mind,
reward-renunciation —
these bring knowledge. Ātman-knowledge is
the greatest knowledge.

आनृशंस्यं परो धर्मः क्षमा च परमं बलं।
आत्मज्ञानं परं ज्ञानं सत्यं व्रतपरं व्रतं॥ vate

39 The ~~ascetic~~ who wishes to attain
the unattainable
must perform tapasyā, be self-restrained,
and world-indifferent.

सत्यस्य वचनं श्रेयः सत्यं ज्ञानं हितं , O Brahmin.
यद्-भूतहितमत्यन्तं भवेत्। eye,
तद् वै सत्यं परं मतं॥ ain,

and whatever ties
him to the world, and he attains
the bliss of Brahman.

42 O Excellent Brahmin, I have told you
all that I
have heard. Is there anything else
you would like to know ?" किं भूयः श्रोतुमिच्छसि

SECTION 214

Mārkaṇḍeya said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

1 When Mokṣa-dharma was explained
in this manner
to the Brahmin, he was delighted, and said
to the meat-seller :

2 "What you have expounded sounds
very reasonable. न्याययुक्तमिदं
There seems to be nothing about Dharma
you do not know."

रुक्म वेदिनि भास्तास्तु चन्द्रलेखा इव अमला:
हुताशनार्चिप्रतिमा सर्वास्तारा इव अद्भुता://

34 [III : 224 | 32 - 38] *The P. Lāl Transcreation*

The mother goddess is shown under 7 motherly forms:
7 MĀTRIKĀS.
7 vowels: 5 pure, two mixed: e and o;
basis of all language.

1) BRĀHMANI (Consort of Brahmā, Power of Immanent Being)
2) MAHEŚVARĪ (Power of Universal Dominion) – ŚIVA Consort
3) KUMĀRĪ, Power of Youth – Skanda's consort
4) VAIṢṆAVĪ (Power of Pervasion) Viṣṇu
5) VĀRĀHĪ, Power of Boar, VARĀHA
6) INDRĀṆĪ, Power of Might, INDRA
7) CĀMUṆḌĀ, Destroyer of Demons

...e shining

पत्नीर् दृष्ट्वा
कामवशं

न न्याय्यं
अकामा
कामयामि अहम्
ईपत्यं

...elf
संस्पृशन्निव
काञ्चनप्रभा:
सर्वास्ता:
शिखाभि:

...ed there for a long time. His passion for them made him give his heart to them.

(The element gazed at its Master, and blushed.)
Christ's water into wine
(Chose Byron as schoolboy)

38 Because he did not succeed in getting their love, ~~and~~ afflicted by his own desires, he went to a forest to commit suicide.

देहत्यागविनिश्चित:

15 DECEMBER 2002

Professar P. Lal reads Rishi Markandeya's account of the battle between Indra and Skanda, and the glories of the World-mothers, in the 158th Sunday weekly session of his complete English transcreation of the Mahabharata of Vyasa at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 15 December 2002 at 11a.m.

~~I am deeply in love~~ I desire him deeply
~~with him~~, so I will disguise myself
as the seven ṛṣis' wives ;

42 In that way I will find him.
He desires them : deeply
so I will satisfy his kāma, and
also satisfy mine.

SECTION 225

15 Dec 2002
Session 158

1 The ṛṣi Aṅgiras' wife Śivā ~~(also called Svāhā)~~
had many virtues
and accomplishments. Assuming that
disguise, ~~Śivā~~ Svāhā

शीलरूपगुणान्विता

p. 1593
Gita Press

2 Went to the Fire. The lovely lady
said to him :
"Agni, I am overcome by kāma ;
satisfy me.

वराङ्गना

3 If you don't I will kill myself.
Hutāśana, I am
Aṅgiras' wife Śivā. I come here
on the advice
of others who sent me to you
after careful thought."

-Agni

करिष्यसि न
चेदेवं
मृतां माम्
उपधारय

अहं आङ्गिरसो भार्या शिवा नाम हुताशन

ablutions, sacrifices, unguents, and
by worship of Skānda.

45 King of kings, when they are given
proper respect and
honour, they grant prosperity,
bravery and long life.

46 I now bow to the Great Deity,
and describe to you
the spirits who influence humans
after their sixteenth year.

47 The man who, awake or asleep,
sees gods, soon becomes
mad. This happens under the influence
of the god-spirits.

48 The man who, seated in comfort
or lying in bed,
sees his *pitṛs*, soon turns mad.
Pitṛ-spirits cause this.

49 The man who insults the Siddhas,
and is cursed by them,
soon turns mad. The Siddha-spirits
are the cause of this.

50 The spirit under whose spell a
man smells sweet scents
and subtle tastes, and turns mad,
is the rākṣasa-spirit.

51 The spirit under whose spell a
man is possessed by
celestial music and turns mad,
is the gandharva-spirit.

52 The spirit under whose spell a
man is hounded by

pisācas and soon turns mad,
is the pisāca-spirit.

(excess of animism)

53 When a yakṣa-spirit somehow or other enters a human body, that person turns mad. This is the yakṣa-spell.

54 The sickness of ~~the mad man,~~ expression of the man whose nature is corrupted by vices, can be cured by methods laid down in the śāstras.

दोषैः

55 Men lose their minds from worry, from fear, from a shocking experience. The solution lies in calming their nerves.

घोराणां दर्शनात्
सान्त्वं तस्य तु साधनम्

56 There are three kinds of malignant spirits — some are playfully mischievous, some are gluttonous, and some are sensual.

क्रीडितुकामो
भोक्तुकामः
अभिकामः

57 These spirits pursue a man until he is ~~a hundred~~ seventy years old. After that, the only spirit that remains is fever.

भवेज्ज्वरः

58 These spirits cannot affect the self-controlled and mind-balanced, the unlazy, clean, the theist, ~~god-believing,~~ the śraddhā-possessing.

59 I have described to you all the spirits that ~~influence~~ afflict the nature of human beings. ~~thy devotees,~~ The bhaktas of Maheśvara-Śiva, ~~Siva~~, will be unharmed.

अप्रकीर्णेन्द्रियं दान्तं शुचिं नित्यमतन्द्रितं ।
आस्तिकं श्रद्दधानं च वर्जयन्ति सदा ग्रहाः ॥

2 There is no god equal
to a husband, Satyabhāmā.
If a husband is pleased,
all desires are filled;
if a husband is displeased,
all are frustrated.

3 A husband gives offspring
and various other pleasures.
A husband gives beds
and cushions and robes,
garlands and perfumes,
fame and heaven.

4 It is not easy
in this world to be happy.
Chaste women specially
suffer the most.
Serve Krishna with love
and hardship, if need be.

5 Act in a manner —
offering cushions and garlands
and perfumes and service —
that pulls him to you,
making him think,
She truly loves me.

6 At the sound of his voice
near the gate of the house,
arise and be ready.
As soon as he enters,
offer him a seat,
and water for his feet.

7 Should he order a maid
to do him some service,
do it quickly yourself.

सर्वात्मना मां भजतीति सत्ये

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa [III : 234 | 8 - 12] 19

Let Krishna have the feeling
you love him ~~completely~~. with all
~~O Satyabhāmā;~~ your ātman, O Satye.

8 Whatever he tells you,
even if not secret, यदि अपि अगुह्यं
repeat it to no one ;
if any of your co-wives सपत्नी
should mention it to him,
Vāsudeva-Krishna ~~he~~ will resent it. भवेद् विरागः

9 Strive always for his good,
feed all ... r
n.

Pradyumna, very handsome, was Krishna's son by Rukmini. He was the embodiment of Kāma, the god of love.

harm him.

मदं प्रमादं पुरुषेषु

ır guideline.

हित्वा

Sāmba was Jāmbavatī's son; very handsome; the wives of Krishna fell in unnatural love with him, so Krishna cursed them — they would be carried away by robbers, and Sāmba would become a leper. Sāmba gave birth to an iron rod which caused the destruction of the Yādavas.

Sāmba.

महाकुलीनाभिः

l spotless
husbands ;

;luttonous,
rish.

Keeps away enemies,

aments
sband."

Satyabhāmā's sons by Krishna were Bhīma + others.

त्यजेत्

15 Mahārāja, we have heard that
they are camped near
a lake in Dvaitavana-forest
with many Brahmins. श्रिया परमया युत:

16 Go there radiantly prosperous, ~~king,~~ mahārāja,
and scorch the Pāṇḍavas,
like the sun that scorches everything
with its dazzling rays.

17 You were a king, ~~they~~ and Pāṇḍu's sons would not
admit it ; you were prosperous,
they denied it. Now you are lord, they
are nothing. See them ! पश्य पाण्डुसतान् नृप

या श्रियं सुहृदश्चैव दुहृदश्च विशाम्पते ।
पश्यन्ति पुरुषे दीप्तां सा समर्था भवत्युत ॥

19 Only that prosperity is real prosperity,
O lord of the earth ~~prosperity~~ which is
seen by one's friends as well
as one's enemies.
विशाम्पते

20 What happiness is greater than, परमं सुखं
being prosperous oneself,
to see one's enemy in adversity ;
it is like a man
on a hill-top looking at one
plodding below. (Lucretian pleasure)

O tiger-among-kings!

21 The happiness one gets from seeing
one's enemies struggling
is greater than the joy of getting
a son, wealth, or kingdom.

22 What greater happiness can there be
for someone prosperous

न पुत्रधनलाभेन न राज्येनापि विन्दति ।
प्रीतिं नृपतिशार्दूल यामामित्राघदर्शनात् ॥

to see Arjuna moving around
dressed in tree-bark ?

23 Dress your wife in luxurious robes
and take her to see
bark-and-skin-clad Draupadī, and
increase Draupadī's grief.

24 Let Draupadī bewail her lot
when she sees your
wife richly decked. Her grief will exceed
her suffering in the sabhā."

25 Having said this to Duryodhana
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
both Śakuni and Karṇa lapsed
suddenly into silence.

SECTION 238

1 The words of Karṇa (Vaiśampāyana
continued) delighted
Duryodhana. But he suddenly became
melancholy, and said :

2 "Karṇa, what you have told me
has often occurred
to me. But I will not be allowed
to see the Pāṇḍavas.

3 King Dhṛtarāṣṭra feels too deeply
for the Pāṇḍavas.
He thinks their tapasyā has greatly
enhanced their prowess.

4 Bear-chary, If he gets to know
what our motives are,
I doubt he will give permission
to go there.

कर्णस्य वचनं श्रुत्वा राजा दुर्योधनस्ततः ।
हृष्टो भूत्वा पुनर्दीन इदं वचनमब्रवीत् ॥

In Canto 9, Gita śloka 17
वेद्यं पवित्रमोङ्कार ऋक्साम यजुरेव च . *Lāl Transcreation*
'I am the goal of Knowledge, the sacred ॐ,
the Ṛk, Sāma, Yajur" — not Atharva

ring
another defeat without Duryodhana,
karma-sacrifice

23 Started a ~~yajña~~ to summon him
in front of them.
Mantra-chanters began with the mantras
of Bṛhaspati and Uśanas - Śukra,

24 Performing rituals which the Atharva-Veda and Upanisads
declare as capable of being accomplished
through mantra-power ~~and~~ japa.

आरण्यक क्रिया: मन्त्रजाप्य - समायुक्ता

25 Strict-vowed mantra-chanting Brahmins, learned in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas,
meditated deep and poured libations
of ghee and milk
In the sacred fire. O rājā!
~~To the accompaniment of mantra-chants.~~

सुदृढव्रता: वेदवेदाङ्गपारगा: हवि: क्षीर

26 When the rites were completed,
~~completed, a miracle-shape arose,~~ a mahā-wonder-woman with gaping month
Kṛtyā, materialised, saying "What shall I do?"

27 Pleased, the Daitya anti-gods commanded her,
saying "Bring ~~the son~~ rājā Duryodhana, the son
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra here — he is engaged
in a fasting-vow."

कृत्या: practising magic or sorcery; bewitchin

28 Thus ordered, Kṛtyā ~~she~~ went away, saying,
"It will be done."
In an instant she came to the spot
where rājā Suyodhana Duryodhana was.

निमेषादगमच्चापि यत्र राजा सुयोधन:

29 She lifted him up and transported
the rājā ~~him~~ to Pātāla. Rasātala-L
She informed the anti-gods she had
brought the king. Dānava-L
Seeing Duryodhana brought at night
among them, the anti-gods Dānava L

कर्मासिद्धौ तदा तत्र जृम्भमाना महाद्भुता ।
कृत्या समुत्थिता राजन् किं करोमि इति चाब्रवीत्

उत्फुल्ललोचनाः

30 Were delighted. Their eyes widening
in joy, their hearts
brimming with success, they spoke flatteringly
to Duryodhana. साभिमानमिदम्

SECTION 252

वाक्यं

"O Indra-among-rājās, Dānava

1 ~~"King of kings,"~~ said the anti-gods,
protector of the Bharata ~~scion of the Kurus,~~ dynasty Suyodhana-Duryodhana!
Bho! Bho! You are always surrounded by brave
and brilliant ~~men~~ mahātmas.

2 Why are you so stubborn about अकार्षीः
fasting to death ?
Suicide leads to terrible consequences, साहसमिदम्
and brings reproach.

आत्मत्यागी हि अधो याति

3 Wise men like you cannot indulge बुद्धिमन्तो
in demeaning deeds
which go against their doer and frustrate
their own purpose.

4 Rāja, ~~King~~, control yourself. Give up your
resolve. It is contrary → धर्मार्थसुख-
to dharma, prosperity, and happiness ; नाशीनाम्
it cannot bring you
fame, prowess and success. It will
delight your enemies.

यशप्रताप-वीर्यघ्नीं शत्रूणाम् हर्षवर्धनीम्

5 King, lord, prabhu, find out the nature of
the divine origin
of your birth and your wonderful body — निर्माणं
and be patient. च शरीरस्य तत्त्वं दिव्यतां

6 O rājā! In the distant past, we practised
tapasyā and obtained
you from ~~High Divinity~~. Your chest
is made of thunder,
Maheśvara-Śiva.

चात्मनो नृप

पुरा त्वं तपसा अस्माभिर्लब्धो महेश्वरात्

अङ्गान् वङ्गान् कालिङ्गांश्च शुण्डिकान् मिथिलानथ
मागधान् कर्करखण्डांश्च निवेश्य विषयेऽऽत्मनः ॥

14 *[III : 254 | 6 - 16] The P. Lāl Transcreation*

6 He seemed to be everywhere, conquering
and subjugating.
All the kings of the Himālayas were
forced to pay tribute.

7 He moved southwards, and brought the rājās of Nepāla under his
power, after which he struck
in the east.

8 Aṅga, Baṅga, Kaliṅga, Śuṇḍika, Mithilā,
Magadha, Karkhaṇḍava — he annexed these,

9 And attacked Āvaśira, Yodhya and Ahikṣatra.
Annexing these, he marched on Vatsabhūmi.

10 Devastating Vatsabhūmi, he attacked Kevala and
Mṛttikāvatī,
Mohana, Pattana, Tripurī and Kosala.

प्रीतोऽस्मि तव राजेन्द्र विक्रमेण
न ते विघ्नं करिष्यामि बलेन च ।
प्रतिज्ञां समपालयम् ॥

... te. Then
... ing many chariot-warriors.
... fiercely with Rukmin.
... nd then said to Karṇa :

13 ... sed
with your exploits.
I have fulfilled my Kṣatriya vow ;
I will fight no more.

14 I will gladly offer you all the gold
that you desire."
Subduing Rukmin, Karṇa turned
to Pāṇḍya and ~~Śailya~~ Śaila.

15 He conquered Kerala, and subdued Nīla,
son of Veṇudārī, and other southern kings.

16 Sūta's son Karṇa defeated Śiśupāla's son, and
brought under his sway all the neighbouring rulers.

सूतनन्दन

O bull-brave

17 ~~Most excellent~~ Bharata, after defeating
the Avanti rulers,
he made peace with them ; he routed
the western Vṛṣṇis.

18 Moving to the realm of Varuṇa,
he exacted tribute
from the Yavana and Barbara tribes
in the west.

यवनान् बर्बरान्

19 Conquering the whole world — east,
west, north, south —
he singlehanded routed the Mlecchas
and the hill-races,

विजित्य पृथिवीं सर्वं

20 Bhadras, Rohitakas, Āgneyas, Mālavas ;
he overcome the people-ruled territories.

गणान्

21 Smiling, he subdued the kingdoms of
the Śaśakas and Yavanas ;
he routed the chariot-warriors led
by Nagnajit.

22 Having overrun the whole world,
the mahā ~~the~~ chariot-warrior Karṇa,
that tiger-among ~~Karṇa, most excellent of~~ men, returned
to Hastināpura.

पुरुषव्याघ्र

23 There the mahā- ~~mighty~~ archer was received
by Duryodhana,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and Duryodhana's brothers.
O mahārāja Janamejaya!

24 They honoured him profusely on his
world-conquest,
and Duryodhana specially celebrated
his feat, saying :

अर्चयामास

8 She recalled Krishna, the slayer कंसनिषूदनम्
of Kamsa. She said:
"Krishna! Krishna! O mahā-muscled one, ~~Strong-armed~~, eternal,
son of Devaki! महाबाहो

9 Vāsudeva! देवकीनन्दनाव्यय
Jagannātha!
Saviour of our followers!
Viśvātman! Ātman of the universe! विश्वात्मन्
Viśvajanaka! Creator of the universe! विश्वजनक
Viśvaharta! Destroyer of the universe! विश्वहर्त: प्रभोऽव्ययं
Undecaying divinity!

सर्वाध्यक्ष पराध्यक्ष
त्वामहं शरणं गता ।
पाहि मां कृपया देव
शरणागतवत्सल ॥ 12 ॥

प्रपन्नपाल गोपाल
प्रजापाल परात्पर

clear thought!

नतास्मि ते
ऐण्य वरदानन्त
अगतीनां गतिर्भव
पुराणपुरुष

ne comprehends!

नीलोत्पलदलश्याम
पद्मगर्भारुणेक्षण ।
पीताम्बरपरीधान
लसत् कौस्तुभभूषण ॥ 13 ॥ owers!

त्वमादिरन्तो भूतानां
त्वमेव च परायणम् । gem!
परात्परतरं ज्योतिर्विश्वात्मा ation! You are!
सर्वतोमुख: ॥ 14 ॥

O Light beyond lights!
O Ātman of the universe!
O Multi-faced lord!

15 They call you the Supreme Seed,
The source of all wealth.
O lord of the gods,
Remover of the fears of your followers!

16 You saved me in the sabhā
When Duḥśāsana insulted me.
Help me now too
In my great predicament."

17 Eulogised by Draupadī, Krishna,
devoted to his devotees,
God of gods, lord of the world,
saw her distress;

18 And mysteriously-moving Krishna,
lord Keśava, left
Rukmini on the bed beside him, and
hurried to Draupadī.

19 Seeing him arrive, Draupadī, delighted,
did *praṇāma*,
and told him all about the ascetic
and his demands.

20 Krishna said to her: "Draupadī,
I am famished.
First feed me, and then tell me
about these matters."

21 Embarrassed, Draupadī said, "Lord,
the vessel given
by the sun-god remains full
until I eat.

23 FEBRUARY 2003

Professor P. Lal reads of the abduction of Draupadi by the Sindhu raja Jayadratha in the 168th weekly Sunday session of his complete English transcreation of the Mahabharata of Vyasa at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 23 February 2003 at 11 a.m.

who have not wavered
even when attacked by
yakṣas and rākṣasas.

3 Never speak insultingly
of the learned and those
who practise tapasyā
at home or in forest.
Only barking dogs ~~only~~
make fun of these.

4 I do not think any
of the Kṣatriyas here
can hold you by the hand
and pull you ~~from~~ out of the ditch
that you have been digging
under your feet.

5 Defeating Dharmarāja ?
It's like taking a stick
and trying to separate
a mountain-huge, rutting
leader of elephants
from the main herd.

(*) 1. Agriculture
2. Trade
3. Forts
4. Bridge-building
5. Training elephants
6. Charge of treasuries
7. Collecting taxes
8. Developing unpeopled territories
9. प्रभुशक्ति
10. मन्त्र शक्ति
11. उत्साह शक्ति
12. प्रभुसिद्धि
13. मन्त्रसिद्धि
14. उत्साह सिद्धि
15. प्रभुदय
16. मन्त्रोदय
17. उत्साहोदय

SEVENTEEN QUALITIES

यदा समाहृत्य
पलायमानः
क्रुद्धं यदा द्रक्ष्यसि
भीमसेनम्

men, पुरुषोत्तमाभ्यां

कृष्णोरगौ

वेणु कदुली नल
कर्कटीव गर्भम्

.ch me."

"I know about the Pandavas.
I know ~~who they are~~ who they are.
Do not try to frighten me.
I will not be put off
by threats, Kṛṣṇā- Draupadī. Kṛṣṇā- SEVENTEEN QUALITIES (see above)

11 We also, Kṛṣṇā- Draupadī,
are born in the seventeen-
qualitied high families, सप्तदशेषु कुलेषु जाताः (*)

(*) Prajāpati, disguised as a deer, chases his daughter out of lust, and Śiva, armed with a trident, chases Prajāpati and beheads him. The deer-head of Prajāpati becomes the star — or the cluster of stars called the Mrgaśiras.

Lāl Transcreation

ho

क्लिष्टकर्मणः

रावणस्तु यतिर्भूत्वा

मुण्डः कुण्डी

त्रिदण्डधृक

18 Impelled by fate, Sītā asked Rāma to get her the deer. विधिचोदिता

Rāma, eager to please her, picked up his bow,

19 And, leaving Lakṣmaṇa to guard her, gave chase. Carrying a bow, quiver, and sword, wearing leather finger-protectors,

20 Rāma chased the deer as Rudra-Śiva chased the star-deer.* रुद्रस्तारामृगं (*)

The rākṣasa-deer alternately appeared and disappeared,

21 Luring Rāma far from the ashram.

Rāghava-Rāma guessed the identity of the deer, correctly supposing him to be a rākṣasa;

22 He fitted an arrow of sure aim and shot down the deer-form. Wounded, the deer, in Rāma's voice, रामस्वरम्

Śrīpāda Damodara Satavalekara

"जैसे हरिण रूपधारी प्रजापति के पीछे शिव दौड़े थे"

tr. of Critical Ed.

अनार्यांकरुणारम्भ नृशंस कुलपांसन (Aranya Kāṇḍa पापे [45] XLV: 21) in Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa — Sītā to Lakṣmaṇa ignoble, merciless, violent, disgrace to the family, vicious

[3 | 23 - 30] 31

creaming for

cha heard those

source of

na

ie, do not fear !

ia ?

one, Rāma will

t."

The sobbing Sita heard this, and looked
suspiciously at Lakṣmaṇa.

26 The faithful, chaste Sita, moved by
weakness common to
her sex, doubted innocent Lakṣmaṇa,
and said harshly :

27 "Fool, I know you lust for me.
But I will never
allow you to touch me — I will
kill myself first !

28 I'll fling myself from a hill, I'll
jump into fire,
rather than forsake Rāma to live with
a scoundrel like you,

29 A tigress in the care of a jackal !"
Lakṣmaṇa listened
to Sitā — Lakṣmaṇa who was devoted
utterly to Rāma, and

30 Who possessed the noblest character,
and shut his ears.
Taking his bow, he started following
Rāma's footprints.

पर्यशङ्कत लक्ष्मणम्

साध्वी पतिव्रता स्त्रीस्वभावेन शुद्धचारित्रभूषणा

मूढ कामो त्वं प्रार्थयसे हृदा

हन्यामात्मानमात्मना

with a sword शस्त्रमादाय

शार्दूली क्रोष्टुकं यथा

प्रियराघवः Rāghava-

The night-rangers

20 ~~They~~ fell with a loud crash on
the ground; their
ribs ~~were smashed~~, and they lay there,
severely wounded.

प्रहारवरपीडिताः

21 He made another mighty leap from
the roof of the
palace, cleared the walls of Laṅkā,
and landed in his camp.

Indra-of-the Kosalas
22 The forest-lord informed Rāma of
what had happened.
Rāghava-Rāma praised him highly, and the energetic
Angada Vānara rested.

कोसलेन्द्र

विशश्राम स

तेजस्वी

23 Descendant-of-Raghu Rāma ordered
a concerted attack
by the wind-swift tree-men which
breached Laṅkā's walls.

रघुनन्दन

हरीणां

भेदयामास लङ्कायाः

24 Lakṣmaṇa, attacking, with Vibhīṣaṇa
and the bear-lord near
Jāmbavān, demolished the impregnable

कोटिशतसहस्र

हरि = fawn, reddish-brown, tawny, pale yellow, yellow, fallow, bay; green; horse, steed; the sun; a monkey; ray of light, moon, a jackal, parrot, peacock, the koel, goose, frog, snake, wind, Indra, Viṣṇu-Krishna, Brahmā, Yama, Śiva, Śukra, name of a rākṣasa, of a son of Garuḍa, of a Dānava anti-god.

कुक्षि शालिनाम्

inned

रणपाण्डुरां

ly

28 The walls, swarming with tree-men
with skins the colour
of ears of paddy, *śirīṣa*-flowers, the new-born
sun, creamy like flax,

29 Seemed to put on a reddish hue.
All the rākṣasas
and their wives and elders were awed
by this phenomenon.

30 The invaders smashed the gem-encrusted
pillars, terraces,
and palace-spires; they pulverised machines
and their propellers;

31 They seized the fire-missiles, *cakras*,
clubs and stones,
and hurled them fiercely into Laṅkā,
screaming and shouting.

32 The night-wanderers who were guarding
the walls fled
in hundreds when the forest-dwellers
launched their offensive.

33 Ordered by their king, hundreds of
thousands of weird-
shaped, any-form-assuming rākṣasas
plunged into action.

34 They released a volley of arrows;
with consummate skill,
they scaled the walls and repulsed
the forest-dwellers.

35 Those horrendous wanderers-of-the-night,
looking like so many
shapeless lumps of flesh, cleared the walls
of all Vānaras.

—

MAHABHARATA VOL 73 DECEMBER 1974

24 Including all kinds of darts, śataghni- fire-
missiles, and razor- sharp
arrows. Seeing the huge māyā
created by ten-necked Daśagrīva- Rāvaṇa,

25 The Vānaras were alarmed and
fled in fear.
Selecting a superlative ~~Rāma, taking out a lovely~~ feather-
adorned golden arrow,

26 The descendant of Kākutstha ~~With golden wings and scintillating~~
Rāma ~~tip,~~ fitted it
to his Brahmā-missile. He chanted
a Brahmā-mantra,

सुपत्रं सुमुखं हेमपुङ्खं शरोत्तमम्

27 Even as the ~~And all the Indra-led~~ gods and gandharvas
~~gandharvas listened~~ led by Śakra-Indra watched
with amazement. Seeing the Brahmā-
weapon fitted,
only a little of their rākṣasa-foe's
life was left,

अल्पावशेषमायुः

28 Thought the gods, Dānava anti-gods, and
Kinnaras. Rāma
took aim, and fired that incredibly
~~beautiful arrow~~ swift Brahmā-arrow-missile —

29 An incomparable ~~A fabulous~~ weapon, fierce ~~straight~~ like
Brahmā's rod of power,
fated to kill Rāvaṇa. As soon
as Rāma fired it, O Bhārata-Yudhiṣṭhira,

रावणान्तकरं घोरं ब्रह्मदण्डमिव

30 The greatest of the rākṣasas, with
his chariot, his
charioteer and horses, exploded in
a mahā-burst ~~a ball~~ of flame.

राक्षसश्रेष्ठः

प्रजज्वाल महाज्वालेनाग्निनाभिपरिप्लुतः

31 The gods, gandharvas and Cāraṇas,
seeing Rāvaṇa
obliterated by indefatigable Rāma,
were exultant.

32 The five elements deserted Rāvaṇa.
The energy of
the Brahmā-weapon deprived him of
his universal power.

33 The atoms of his body, his flesh
and blood disintegrated
with such force that not even
ashes remained.

SECTION 291

1 After annihilating the wicked rākṣasa
lord Rāvaṇa, the
enemy of the gods, Rāma and Sumitrā's
son celebrated victory.

2 With ten-necked Rāvaṇa killed, the
gods, led by ṛṣis,
sang the praises of mighty-armed Rāma,
"Victory to you !"

3 The gods, gandharvas and other
inhabitants of heaven
pleased lotus-eyed Rāma by flower-showers
and praise-offerings.

4 After this pūjā of Rāma, they returned
to their abodes.
O Yudhiṣṭhira, the sky was one big
joyous festival.

⊛ कोपं (Crit. Ed.) = angry with you.

24 विदिता हि मे = I know the ways of men and women.

[III: 291 | 21 - 27] The P. Lāl Transcreation

21 She stood up among all of them. कल्याणी
The radiant and
renowned princess of Videha said यशस्विनी वैदेही
to broad-chested Rāma :

22 "Prince, I do not blame you. राजपुत्र न ते दोषं करोमि
You know the ways विदिता हि ते ।
गतिं स्त्रीणां नराणां
शृणु चेदं वचो मम: ॥

मातरिश्वन् : a devata.
Re: birth of Agni, in the Vedas. Though Agni originates from the clouds and reaches the earth as lightning, it hides itself, making itself invisible to man. It was Mātariśvan who took Agni's form from the earth and gave it to the Bhṛgu family and thus made it possible for them to use fire as and when required.

"He Who Develops within his Mother" i.e. the fire-stick

~~identified with Vāyu~~ in Ṛg Veda I: 92: 6

...th of all,
न्तरश्चरति भूतानां
तरिश्वा सदागतिः ।
तु प्राणान् यदि पापं
चराम्यहम् ॥

...तथाऽऽकाशं पृथिवी
वायुरेव च ।
तु मम प्राणान्
यदि पापं चराम्यहम् ॥

...es,
...as
यथाहं त्वदृते वीर
नान्यं स्वप्ने अपि
अचिन्तयम् ।

said Vāyu.

The princess of Mithilā is pure, O rāghava, rājā.
Be one with your wife." अपापा मैथिली

सुसूक्ष्ममपि नापराध्याति

The Mahābhārata of Vyās [III : 291 / 28 - 36] 25

Agni said: "O Rāghava-descendant!

28 I reside in the bodies of all.
O descendant of Kakutstha,
Maithili-Sītā is perfectly blameless."

29 "O Rāghava descendant," said Varuṇa,
"I am Varuṇa, the sap in all bodies, the rasa.
Accept the princess of Mithilā."

30 "Son," said Brahmā, पुत्र
"What you have done is not surprising.
You know the dharma of rājā-ṛṣis.
But listen to me, O noble-charactered Kākutstha."

साधो सद्वृत्त शृणु वचो मम

31 The enemy of the gods, the nāgas,
gandharvas, yakṣas,
Dānava anti-gods and mahā-ṛṣis has been
destroyed by your heroism.

32 मत्प्रसादात् By my grace, he was granted the boon
of indestructibility. अवश्य
For some reason I spared the
scoundrel for some time.

33 Sītā was destined to be abducted by this ill-ātmaned Rāvaṇa for his own
doom. I protected her from violation
through Nalakubera's curse.

34 That curse laid down that if Rāvaṇa
enjoyed any woman
against her will, his head would shatter
into a hundred fragments. अकामा

35 Mahā-illustrious Rāma, radiant hero,
do not have doubts
about this. You have rendered a mahā-
service to the gods."

36 "My son, you have pleased me,"
said Daśaratha.

प्रीतोऽस्मि वत्स भद्रं ते

MAHABHARATA VOL 74 JANUARY 1975

23 Only one defect — and no other.
Satyāvan does not
have long to live: A year from now
he will die."

24 "O lovely Sāvitri," said the rājā,
"go and find yourself
another husband. He has an all-
merit-cancelling defect.

25 Celestial Nārada, whom the gods
honour, says that
a year from now, short-lived

ed,
lowed,
ghter'.
h virtues
I cannot
the
vitness
Nārada,
hake her
ssesses

I would therefore recommend you give
your daughter to him."

31 The rājā said, "Your words are right;
they should not, bhagavān, revered one,
be disregarded. You are my guru, I
will do as you say."

32 "May your daughter Sāvitrī be ~~given~~ bestowed
without any regret,"
said Nārada. "And may you prosper.
I must go now." भद्रमस्तु

33 Saying this, Nārada rose to the sky
and returned to heaven.
And the rājā began preparing for
his daughter's marriage.

SECTION 295

1 Keeping in mind Nārada's advice
about the marriage
~~of his daughter,~~ the king started preparing
~~for the~~ wedding.

2 He invited the elderly Brahmins,
the ṛtviks and the
purohitas, and on an auspicious day
set out with Sāvitrī दिने पुण्ये

3 To the ashram of Dyumatsena
in the forest.
Aśvapati and the Brahmins
walked up to the ~~royal ṛṣi~~ rāja-ṛṣi.

4 They saw the ~~highly fortunate and~~ mahā-fortune-favored
~~profoundly wise king~~
sightless king चक्षुहीन

YAMA: MHB XII : 3446
"He who impartially controls all beings is Yama".
यमो यच्छति भूतानि सर्वाण्येवाविशेषतः
He is मृत्यु, अन्तक, काल, कृतान्त (Finisher), शमन (Settler), पाशिन (Noose-Carrier), श्राद्धदेव, दण्डधर, भीमशासन (dreadful punisher).

Son of विवस्वत, his mother is शरण्यु (cloud), his brother is Manu the Lawgiver. Twin sister यमी loves him passionately. यमुना is the river form of Yami.

The P. Lāl Transcreation

em, आदित्यसम-
had तेजसं
sight ! भयावहम्
's head and
trembling,
must दैवतं त्वं
u are, अभिजानामि
asyā, तपोऽन्विता
ovely lady, पतिव्रता
Satyavān,
usband, पार्थिवात्मज

tie him up and take him away. That is why I am here."

"Bhagavan, revered one."

is said Lord, prabhu,
why have कस्मादागतोऽसि
ima
ed स्वयं प्रभु
of his visit
d, "because it

He is shown sometimes with 3 wives: Hema-mālā, Suśīlā, Vijayā.
He holds a noose and a staff, and carries an axe, a sword, and a dagger.

To the virtuous, he appears like Viṣṇu, with conch, cakra, mace + lotus. To the wicked, he appears like a 300-yojana long monster. He rides a buffalo.

धर्मसंयुक्तो गुणसागरः रूपवान्

fit to bring such an ocean-vast, accomplished,
handsome man of dharma."

17 Yama, with a swift jerk, pulled out
of Satyavān's body
a thumb-sized being, and trussed Satyavān
firmly with his noose.

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रं पुरुषं

18 With its *prāṇa* gone, the breath-less
body lost its glow ;
it became inert, and displeasing
to the sight.

19 Yama dragged it and went southwards.
Grief-stricken Sāvitrī,
~~faithful~~ devoted to her husband, fortune-favoured, mahā-
steadfast-vowed,
Sāvitrī, illustrious lady, followed Yama
wherever he went.

दुःखार्ता महाभागा नियमव्रतसंसिद्धा पतिव्रता

20 "Sāvitrī," said Yama, "go back !
Perform his last rites.
Your duty to your husband is over.
You must stop here."

21 "The eternal dharma," replied Sāvitrī,
"is that I follow
my husband wherever he goes, wherever
he is taken.

1783

22 Nothing can interfere with this — my
tapasyā, ~~reverence for my~~ guru-bhakti,
my ~~elders~~, love for him, my vow, and your grace
assure me of this.

the Blough p. 44

23 The wise, who know truth, have said
one becomes friends
with another by walking seven steps with him.
I am your friend. Listen to me.

यत्र मे नीयते भर्ता स्वयं वा यत्र गच्छति ।
मया च तत्र गन्तव्यं एष धर्मः सनातनः ॥

And annihilation of enemies,
will surely I ~~can~~ get nothing but ~~honour.~~ fame. / यशः प्राप्स्यामि केवलम्

37 By sparing the frightened
Who beg for their lives in battle,
By saving old men, children,
And Brahmins from mahā- danger,

38 I will have honour in this life
And heavenly fulfilment in the next.
I am firm in this vow of mine:
I will sacrifice my life,
But not my honour."

39 ⟶ Add śloka. ⊛

SECTION 301

39. Therefore, O divine one, ⊛ hat
I will give to Maghavat: (Indra) ıer and
When he comes disguised ıally ~~wishes~~ प्राणैर्मेऽस्तु
as a Brahmin nd
Whatever he wants.
And in this way I ;)
Will find the supreme vill
fulfilment. pay.

other,

relatives are so only so long as
one is alive.

5 Kings are brave only so long as
they are alive.
Understand this, shining one — honour is best
for the living.

6 What good is honour to a charred
skeleton ? Honour
is not enjoyed by the dead, but
by the living.

7 A dead man's honour is a garland
on a skeleton.
Because you have bhakti for me,
I tell you this.

8 I protect my followers, so I
tell you this.
I consider the fact that you,
O strong-armed one,
so I say this.
Take my advice.

9 There is a profound mystery in
all this, which
is why I advise you. Act firmly,
and without doubts.

10 Bull among men, you are not fit
to know that which
the gods do not know. Hence my caution.
In time you will know.

11 Son of Rādhā, let me repeat what
I have said.
Listen carefully — Do not give the ear-
rings to Indra.

12 O radiant being ! Your ear-rings
make you shine

व्रीडिता साभवद् बाला कन्याभावे रजस्वला

3 Even as she thought this, she noticed
she was menstruating.
she Because was still unmarried, this
filled her with shame.

4 One day she was resting in a
maha-luxurious bed in
her room when she saw the sun-mandala
rising in the east.

ददर्शादित्यमण्डलं

न ततर्प च रूपेण भानोः
संध्यागतस्य सा
(Crit. Ed. = "She was not satiated by the morning sun's beauty."
Gita Press: न चातप्यत...
"She did not feel the heat of the morning sun."

h-waisted मनोदृष्टि
tured by सुमध्यमा
loveliness.
than. दिव्यदर्शनम्
ur and
mantra नराधिप
voke कौतूहलं
भाविनी
prāṇāyāma,
ara,
enough, O rājā,
~~before her~~ he appeared before her:

9 Honey-yellow skin
Maha-powerful arms
Conchshell neck Smiling face
Bracelets-wearing
Diadem-crowned
Everywhere-flaming.

कम्बु = 3 lines in the neck indicating good fortune

10 Through yoga he divided into two,
one ~~giving heat,~~ dazzling in the sky,

मधुपिङ्गो महाबाहुः कम्बुग्रीवो हसन्निव ।
अङ्गदी बद्धमुकुटो दिशः प्रज्वालयन्निव ॥

sweetly!

the other appearing before her. He said परमवल्गुना
very gently to Kunti :

भद्रे 11 "Gentle girl, the strength of your mantra मन्त्रबलात्कृतः
has put me in
your power. Tell me what you desire, rānī,
and I will give it."

12 "Bhagavan! Revered one," ~~"Sun god,"~~ said Kunti, "return to
the place from where
you have come. I was only curious.
Be kind to me, Bhagavan." प्रसीद भगवन्

13 "Slender-waisted beauty," Sūrya said, ~~the sun god~~ तनुमध्यमे
~~said,~~ "I will go,
as you have asked. But invoking a god
~~in vain is not right.~~

सुभगे 14 favoured Fortunate girl, your desire is to have सूर्यात् पुत्रो
a son by Sūrya,
a son with flesh ~~gold~~ armour and ear-rings, भवेदिति
unrivalled in bravery.

गजगामिनि 15 Graceful Elephant-gaited girl, give yourself
up to me. त्वमात्मप्रदानं कुरुष्व
अङ्गने Lovely-figured one, you will then have
your desired son.

16 Susmitā, sweet-smiling one, after intercourse त्वया
with you, I will leave. संगम्य
If today you refuse to do as I have
lovingly ~~sweetly~~ asked you, gentle girl,

17 I will in anger curse you, the Brahmin,
and your father.
They will be destroyed ~~because of~~ by me,
~~your unwillingness~~ all because of you.

18 I will burn ~~destroy~~ your foolish father, त्वत्कृते
who knows nothing ~~of this~~, मूढं

4 In course of time the ~~delicate-~~ exquisite
complexioned ~~beauty~~ unmarried girl वरवर्णिनी कन्या
gave birth to Sūrya's son — a boy
who was god-like.

5 Like his father he wore natural
armour, he had कनकोज्ज्वलकुण्डलं
flaming gold ear-rings, leonine eyes, हर्यक्षं वृषभस्कन्धं
and bull-like shoulders.

6 As soon as he was born, lovely Kunti, यथास्य पितरं तथा
with the nurse's मधूच्छिष्ट
help, placed the baby in a ~~basket~~, भाविनी
comfortable wickerwork basket,

7 Well-made, smooth, and swaddled
the baby
in bees-wax. Weeping, she floated रुदती
it down the Aśva. अश्वनद्याम् वासृजत्

8 O rājā Janamejaya, ~~O king~~, she knew it was improper
for an unmarried
girl to be a mother, but she loved the baby, ~~him~~,
she and wept bitterly.

9 Listen to the words which Kunti वाक्यानि
spoke, even as she
wept, and floated the basket down तच्छृणु
the Aśva river.

10 "Son,
My little one,
May the beings of the sky protect you,
And the beings of earth
And the celestial regions,
May the beings of water protect you.

11 May the paths you tread be holy !
May no one obstruct you.

My Son, may the minds of those who meet you
Never be hostile to you.

12 May Varuṇa, lord of waters,
protect you ! सलिलेश्वरः
May Pavana, god of wind, अन्तरिक्षेऽन्तरिक्षस्थः
Sky-encompassing, everywhere-wandering, सर्वगः
protect you !

13 Son, incomparable तपनस्तपतां वरः
May your heat-dispersing father,
divine Who gave you to me by decree of fate, दत्तोऽस्मि
Protect you wherever you are. → दिव्येन विधिना किल

14 May the Ādityas

जानती चाप्यकर्तव्यं ✻
कन्याया गर्भधारणम् ।
पुत्रस्नेहेन सा राजा
करुणं पर्यदेवयत् ॥

स्वस्ति ते चान्तरिक्षेभ्यः #
पार्थिवेभ्यश्च पुत्रक ।
दिव्येभ्यश्च भूतेभ्यस्तथा
तोयचराश्च ये ॥

शिवास्ते सन्तु पन्थानो
मा च ते परिपन्थिनः ।
आगताश्च तथा पुत्र
भवन्त्वद्रोहचेतसः ॥

se

त्वां विदेष्वपि
nd, →
r armour. कवचेन
अभिसूचितम्
-Vibhāvasu,
ine eyes
धन्या सा प्रमदा या त्वां
→ पुत्रत्वे कल्पयिष्यति
यस्यास्त्वं तृषितः पुत्र
: breasts. स्तनं पास्यसि देवजा
भानुर्विभावसुः

दक्ष = able, fit, expert, adroit, clever, dexterous, industrious, intelligent, strong; right (as opposed to left); ability, talent, strength of will, energy. (see śloka 74) *

P. Lal Transcreation

दाक्ष्यं — ?
ability. दानं *
dāna-1 सत्यं
satya-1
śīla-1 शीलं
आत्मा
??? दैवकृत सखा
उपजीवनं
परायणं

72 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"A man's son is his ātman.
His wife is his destiny-chosen friend.
Rain clouds are his main support.
Charity is his supreme refuge."

पुत्र भार्या पर्जन्य दान
loved-and-loving sakhā

73 The yakṣa asked :
"What is most worthy of praise ?
What is the best wealth ?
What is the greatest gift ?
What is the finest happiness ?"

धन्यनामुत्तमम्
धनानां उत्तमम्
लाभानामुत्तमम्
सुखानामुत्तमम्

74 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"Skill is most worthy of praise.
Sacred knowledge is the best wealth.
Health is the greatest gift.
Contentment is the greatest happiness."

दाक्ष्यं श्रुतं आरोग्य तुष्टि

75 The yakṣa asked :
"What is the greatest dharma in the world?
What dharma is always fruitful ?
Controlling what means freedom from sorrow ?
With whom is friendship never wasted ?"

धर्मः परो
सदाफलः

Satvalekar translates this as चतुरता (cleverness, shrewdness)

76 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"Refraining from harm is the greatest dharma.
The dharma of the Vedas is always fruitful.
The controlled mind means freedom from sorrow.
Friendship with good men is never wasted."

77 The yakṣa asked :
"Renunciation of what
makes a man loved ?
Renunciation of what
brings freedom from sorrow ?
Renunciation of what
makes a man wealthy ?
Renunciation of what
makes a man happy ?"

78 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"Renunciation of pride
makes a man loved.
Renunciation of anger
brings freedom from sorrow.
Renunciation of lust
makes a man wealthy.
Renunciation of greed
makes a man happy."

79 The yakṣa asked :
"Why does one give to Brahmins ?
Why does one give to actors and dancers ?
Why does one give to servants ?
Why does one give to kings ?"

80 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"One gives to Brahmins out of dharma.
One gives to actors and dancers to be praised.
One gives to servants that they may live.
One gives to kings out of fear."

81 The yakṣa asked :
"What envelops the world ?
What prevents self-discovery ?
Why are friends forsaken ?
What blocks entry into heaven ?"

82 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"Ignorance envelops the world.
Tamas prevents self-discovery.
Friends are forsaken for greed.
Attachment to things blocks entry into heaven."

83 The yakṣa asked :
"When is a man dead ?
When does a kingdom die ?
When is a śrāddha as good as dead ?
When is a yajña dead ?"

84 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"When a man is poor, he is dead.
A kingdom dies when the king dies.
An ignorant priest means a śrāddha dead.
A yajña without dakṣiṇā is dead."

85 The yakṣa asked :
"What is the path ?
What are water, food, poison ?
What is the right time for a śrāddha ?
Answer ; drink your fill and take what you will."

86 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"Men of truth are the path.
Water is sky, cow is food, selfish prayer is poison.
A Brahmin is the right time for a śrāddha.
What do you think, O yakṣa ?"

NOT IN. CRIT. ED. Pp. 31-35.

तप: किं लक्षणं

87 The yakṣa asked :
"What constitutes tapasyā ?
What is discipline ?
What is ~~forgiveness?~~ endurance?
What is a sense of shame ?"

दम:
क्षमा
ह्री

88 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
स्वधर्मवर्तित्वं "To follow *sva-dharma* is tapasyā.
मनसो दमनं Restraint of the mind is discipline.
To accept duality, the heat and cold of life, is endurance.
अकार्यनिवर्तनं Not doing what should not be done is sense of shame."

द्वन्द्वसहिष्णुत्वं

89 The yakṣa asked :
"O rājā, ~~"King~~, what is knowledge ?
ज्ञानं शम: What is tranquillity ?
What is the supreme kindness ?
दया परा What is simplicity ?"

आर्जव 90 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"Experience of the Ultimate is knowledge.

तत्त्वार्थसम्बोध:
प्रशान्तता

d.
wish the good of all.
d."

सर्वसुखैषित्वं

समचित्तता

not be conquered ?
ility ?
moral ?
?"

शत्रुर्दुर्जय
व्याधिरनन्तक:
साधु असाधु

l enemy of man.
ty.
eks the good of all.
lacks compassion."

क्रोध
लोभ
सर्वभूतहित
निर्दय

क्षमा :
enduring, suffering, bearing, submissive, resisting (Mahābhārata meaning).

patience, forbearance, indulgence (Viṣṇu Purāṇa)

name of Śiva: "the Patient One"

What is pride ?

मोह मान आलस्य शोक

What is laziness ?
What is grief ?"

94 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"Folly in dharma is delusion.
Exaggerated self-importance is pride.
Inaction in dharma is laziness.
Non-knowledge is grief."

95 The yakṣa asked :
"What do the ṛṣis call steadiness ?
What is known as patience ?
What is the supreme ablution ?
What is charity ?"

96 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"Keeping to one's dharma, *sva-dharma*, is steadiness.
Restraining the senses is patience.
Washing the mind clean is the supreme ablution.
~~Respect for~~ Protection of all creatures is charity."

97 The yakṣa asked :
"Who can be called a paṇḍit ?
Who is a negative thinker ?
Who is the fool ?
What is kāma and what is envy ?"

98 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"The man who knows dharma is a paṇḍit.
The negative thinker is a fool.
The fool is a negative thinker.
Desiring worldly things is kāma.
Envy is a warped heart."

99 The yakṣa asked :
"What is self-importance ?
What is hypocrisy ?

⊛ RIT. ED.

धर्मश्चार्थश्च कामश्च
परस्परविरोधिनः।
एषां नित्यविरुद्धानां
कथमेकत्र संगमः॥

परं दैवं
पैशुन्य

ıorance. महाज्ञानम्
:risy. धर्मो ध्वजोच्छ्रयः
favour. दानफलं
दूषणं

ısh with each other. ⊛
:onciled ?"

102 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"When Dharma and one's wife are in harmony,
Dharma, Artha, and Kāma are reconciled."

103 The yakṣa asked : ball-brave अक्षयो नरकः
"Who gets indestructible hell, O Bharata ?
Answer this question quickly." शीघ्रम् वक्तुमर्हसि

104 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"The man who summons a begging Brahmin
And then refuses him alms, saying, 'No,' नास्ति यो ब्रूयात्
Gets indestructible hell.

मिथ्या
~~ahmins,~~ the Twice-born,
ors, पितृधर्मेषु

charity, दानभोग-
y, विवर्जितः ④

राजन् कुलेन वृत्तेन #
स्वाध्यायेन श्रुतेन वा।
ब्राह्मण्यं केन भवति
प्रब्रूह्येतत् सुनिश्चितम्॥

शृणु यक्ष कुलं तात #
न स्वाध्यायो न च श्रुतम्।
कारणं हि द्विजात्वे
च वृत्तमेव न संशयः॥

ll me truly:
~~education?"~~ #
s of revealed
scriptures?"

स्वाध्याय:
reciting or repeating
or rehearsing to
oneself.

to read, study, recite

वृत्त = round, circular, complete, virtuous conduct, good behaviour, final rhythm.

वृत्तं यत्नेन संरक्ष्यं
ब्राह्मणेन विशेषतः।
अक्षीणवृत्तो न क्षीणो
वृत्ततस्तु हतो हतः॥

पठकाः पाठकाश्चैव
ये चान्ये शास्त्रचिन्तकाः।
सर्वे व्यसनिनो मूर्खा
य क्रियवान् स पण्डितः॥

चतुर्वेदोऽपि दुर्वृत्तः
स शूद्रादतिरिच्यते।
योऽग्निहोत्रपरो दान्तः
स ब्राह्मण इति स्मृतः॥

(*)

217. ED.

The P. Lāl Transcreation

#

Truly —
ation, and it is not study
scriptures.
a twice-born Brahmin.
s character.
ot weak, is never himself
ter is lost.
rs who study the śāstras
ions show character,
four Vedas
ith controlled senses
fice."

*

rson — → प्रियवचनवादी किं लभते
?
ends ?
ng man ?"

बहुमित्रकरः
धर्मरतः

rson

विमृशितकार्यकरः

friends

n

गतिं लभते

NOT IN CRIT. ED.

(5)

को मोदते किमाश्चर्यं (*)
का पन्था का च वार्तिका।
ममैतांश्चतुरः प्रश्नान्
कथयित्वा जलं पिब॥

(*)

- and drink."

पञ्चमेऽहनि षष्ठे वा
शाकं पचति स्वे गृहे।
अनृणी चाप्रवासी च
स वारिचर मोदते॥

ign land,
or sixth part of the day,
al, and eats it.

अहन्यहनि भूतानि
गच्छन्तीह यमालयम्।
शेषाः स्थावरमिच्छन्ति
किमाश्चर्यमतः परम्॥

y go to the realm of Yama,
ive for ever.
n this ?

तर्कोऽप्रतिष्ठः श्रुतयो विभिन्ना
नैको ऋषिर्यस्य मतं प्रमाणम्।
धर्मस्य तत्त्वं निहितं गुहायां
महाजनो येन गतः स पन्थाः॥

en

What great men have followed,
that is the path,
O yakṣa of the waters.

118 In this massively deluded
cauldron of a world,
where the sun is fire,
and the days and nights
fuel for that fire,
and the months and seasons
the ladle of the cauldron,
Kāla cooks creatures.
That is the news."

अस्मिन् महामोहमये कटाहे
सूर्याग्नि रात्रिदिवेन्धनेन।
मासर्तुदर्वीपरिघट्टनेन
भूतानि कालः पचति इति वार्ता॥

MAHABHARATA VOL 76 MARCH 1975

दिवं स्पृशति भूमिं च शब्दः पुण्येन कर्मणा।
यावत् स शब्दो भवति तावत् पुरुष उच्यते॥

119 The yakṣa said :

परंतप "O foe-tormentor, your answers are right.
Tell me : what makes a man man ?
What man has all wealth ?" सर्वधनी नरः

120 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"Word of a man's good karma reaches heaven and
earth.

भूतभव्यभविष्येषु
निःस्पृहः शान्तमनसः।
सुप्रसन्नः सदा योगी
स वै सर्वधनीश्वरः॥

प्रियाप्रिय
...leasant, सुखदुःख
...ture are the same.
...h अतीतानागत
...uture,
...ided, self-contented yogi."

...-wealthy man, O rājā.
... restored to life.

Dark-skinned, pink-eyed, śāla-tree-tall,
Broad-chested and long-armed.
Revive him !"

125 The yakṣa said :
"But Bhīma is dear to you,
And Arjuna is your chief support.
Why do you choose Nakula, O ~~king~~ rājā,
Who is only your step-brother ?

126 Why do you leave out ten-thousand-elephant-strong
Bhīma,
And choose Nakula instead ?

प्रियं तव

127 They say Bhīma is very ~~close~~ dear to you.
Why do you prefer the life of your step-brother ? सापत्नं

128 Why do you leave out Arjuna,
Whose strength of arms is admired by the Pāṇḍavas,
And choose Nakula ?

(6)

129 Yudhiṣṭhira replied :
"Dharma, violated, destroys ;
Dharma, cherished, protects.
I never violate Dharma,
Because it would then destroy me.

धर्म एव हतो हन्ति
धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः
तस्माद् धर्मं न त्यजामि
मा नो धर्मो हतोऽवधीत्

130 Non-injury is the highest dharma —
In my opinion, the ultimate end.
I am firm in non-injury.
Yakṣa, revive Nakula.

आनृशंस्यं परो धर्मः
परमार्थश्च मे मतम्

131 People know rājā Yudhisthira
Is a man of dharma.
I will not swerve from *sva-dharma*.
Yakṣa, revive Nakula.

धर्मशीलः सदा राजा
इति मां मानवा विदुः

132 My father had two wives, Kuntī and Mādrī.
~~I know that both had sons.~~
I want the sons of both to live.

स्वधर्मान्न
चलिष्यामि

133 As Kuntī is to me, so is Mādrī.
I make no distinction.
I treat both as equal mothers.
Yakṣa, revive Nakula."

134 The yakṣa said :
"O bull-brave ~~Excellent~~ Bharata,
Since you hold non-injury above Artha and Kāma,
May all your brothers return to life !"

भ्रातरः सर्वे जीवन्तु

CORRECTIONS

VOLUMES 1 & 2 : THE ĀDI AND SABHĀ PARVAS

On this and the following pages is a list of typos spotted by James Chapman (jim@fuguestatepress.com). Such meticulous tapasyā in a Vyāsa fan not to the culture born is a special type of bhakti that informs American non-academic scholarship at its astonishing best. I offer my *añjali* to a New Yorker whose passion for noting printer's devil and gremlin I will try – I hope not in vain – to emulate in keeping the succeeding Mahābhārata volumes as humanly clean as possible.

ĀDI PARVA

Page	*Line*	*Read*
86	124	though
101	1	rākṣasa
107	4	there
116	11	rigid-vowed
134	9	(comma at beginning of line)
139	10	receptacle
147	6	sons'
163	18	ascetics
179	1	sons
179	10	(fix spacing)
186	24	urine and
205	6	citizens
207	4	one,
252	8	story
254	4	yajñas
254	6	fathered
273	14	To ride
283	103	ear-rings
284	112	mighty
288	15	Karma
91	163	bull's
317	143	*japa*-meditation,
318	149	flesh-slicer.
318	153	earth,
318	155	devis
318	157	śaci
319	164	wealth
320	6	prosperity
322	7	kill!
327	25	snakes
341	19	father
344	20	escort
348	45	was
375	3	Vṛṣaparva
375	7	gods
380	44	father
382	63	disrespects
385	14	enough
385	14	be
386	18	Devayānī
392	46	bristliang
394	3	conqueror
405	27	asking
409	24	serve
409	24	devotedly
409	24	advice
410	37	dictate
412	3	decreed
415	34	anti-gods
418	15	criminals
424	19	install
448	10	regions
453	15.	Surprised
458	5	maha
468	47	Formidable
501	67	creatures
509	86	alone
509	90	smiter
524	6	this

CORRECTIONS : VOLUMES 1 & 2 : THE ĀDI AND SABHĀ PARVAS

Page	Line	Read
525	12	lust
525	14	entered
531	3	as
534	24	meditating
534	25	anointing
534	30	comfortably
535	33	Bhīṣma's
554	4	in
557	4	Once
563	43	enemies."
574	2	heroes
578	35	world's
587	18	blame
588	23	undeserving
597	1	A valiant practiser of tapasyā was Pāṇḍu, and he soon became the delight of Siddhas and Cāraṇas.
598	8	his
601	33	third, *putrikāsuta*, the son on one's wife by a paid-for person; fourth, *paurṇabhava*, to a married woman ...
602	34	*krīta*, *sahoḍa*, *jñātireta*
632	34	on roots .
633	36	news
653	8	friends
660	23	any
673	4	studying
677	11	confident
680	30	Bhṛgu's
680	32	Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma's feet
680	35	[4th line should have no period]
681	41	battle."
683	10	or are friends
683	11	between
684	2	discipleship
686	22	and done
688	31	installs
695	21	noticed.
697	37	came
699	53	dakṣiṇā-fee?"

Page	Line	Read
700	58	middle and
707	9	an auspicious
710	32	single-peaked,
710	Pagination	[I:137:31-35]
711	7	strode in
713	20	*vayava*
714	23	large.
716	3	radiant
717	8	said to
717	18	trespassers
717	18	advice-giver-to
721	36	install
724	16	could
728	18	deafening
730	37	bludgeoning
732	51	bowstring
734	65	quenched
737	3	son,
737	4	in
737	4	chariot
737	7	doer
738	13	in front
738	15	earth
742	11	single
744	27	They
746	41	The jackal said to him
748	63	crossroads
749	68	with
749	69	benefit
752	88	velvety
754	15	sons
755	16	In grief
759	11	Yudhiṣṭhira's exile
764	17	Dhṛtaraṣṭra
764	17	Varanavata
768	5	ruefully
768	6	unhappy
769	12	Pāṇḍavas,
769	13	Yudhiṣṭhira,
770	18&19	[identical slokas?]
772	35	Vāraṇāvata,
775	23	overly
777	3	way,
781	9	thunderstorm
781	14	orders
782	16	Purocana

CORRECTIONS : VOLUMES 1 & 2 : THE ĀDI AND SABHĀ PARVAS

Page	*Line*	*Read*	*Page*	*Line*	*Read*
782	18	had	823	53	the sweetest
782	21	strength	823	57	secluded
784	9	brothers.'	827	1	Pāṇḍavas,
784	12	from	850	3	food-supplies
785	6	Pāṇḍavas."	851	9	cruel deed
785	6	Our	852	20	saying
787	19	homage	856	25	śūdra
790	37	valiant	857	6	[lines 2-4 repeated from sloka 5 in error]
790	40	Yudhiṣṭhira			
791	4	year-old	859	17	mouth,
792	9	howling	859	19	in quick
794	27	palaces	863	15	He
794	34	among	868	11	recall."
795	38	side;	872	11	son
796	44	far	875	30	give me
797	1	in a	877	42	it
797	2	clouds	877	43	*glory*
800	15	feast	880	2	to
802	30	be	882	2	foe
804	2	strong	891	41	useless
804	6	your	907	7	prosper
807	26	to me	926	15	yajña.
807	28	Come	928	29	meat
811	1	supra	932	1	sorrowing
811	7	obeying	950	22	it drinks
814	26	eater	954	22	sacrifice
814	27	I'll	973	10	Balarāma
814	28	oft	979	16	strength
815	31	deafened	982	4	is
816	4	your	988	21	a
816	7	came to kill	1025	4	fault
819	25	appear	1065	9	himself.
819	26	tricked	1069	40	came
819	29	long."	1083	20	words
820	30	sacred	1112	14	rituals
820	34	morning	1168	4	ancient
820	35	night	1169	13	one
821	40	Pāṇḍavas.	1178	16	dazzling-with.
822	50	whatever	1183	33	spear and

I am grateful to Pradip Bhattacharya for noting the folowing missing śloka on page 377 of the Ādi Parva:

26 And Devayānī,
when the two were alone,
privately pleased the strict-vowed youth
with songs and sweet speech.

SABHĀ PARVA

Page	Line	Read
1195	25	You
preface: point 7, paragraph 2		Laughlin
10	11	what should
21	2	spirits,
32	64	Foe-vanquishing
45	26	chant
54	12	[extraneous letter "a" floating]
60	42	also
95	49	easier
151	49	enhancer
173	95	so much
173	96	flowers.
174	108	exquisitely-carved
176	120	asked,
176	125	no one
180	164	intelligent
194	25	enclosure
195	1	to his
198	2	Yudhiṣṭhira's
211	47	pearls
219	92	tremendous
236	196	Dāvanas
251	282	Enhancer
264	395	Kaseru,
285	576	clove,
286	586	horripilating
288	600	[line 2] Yādavas
334	98	Yadavas
334	100	Yudhiṣṭhira,
341	7	discomfiture,
342	12	came
346	8	that
353	39	Yudhiṣṭhira.
363	10	deed-doer
363	15	dresses
390	26	tremendous.
455	4	heroes
461	59	Daṇḍakāraṇya
462	69	[line 1] delete period
470	3	misfortunes

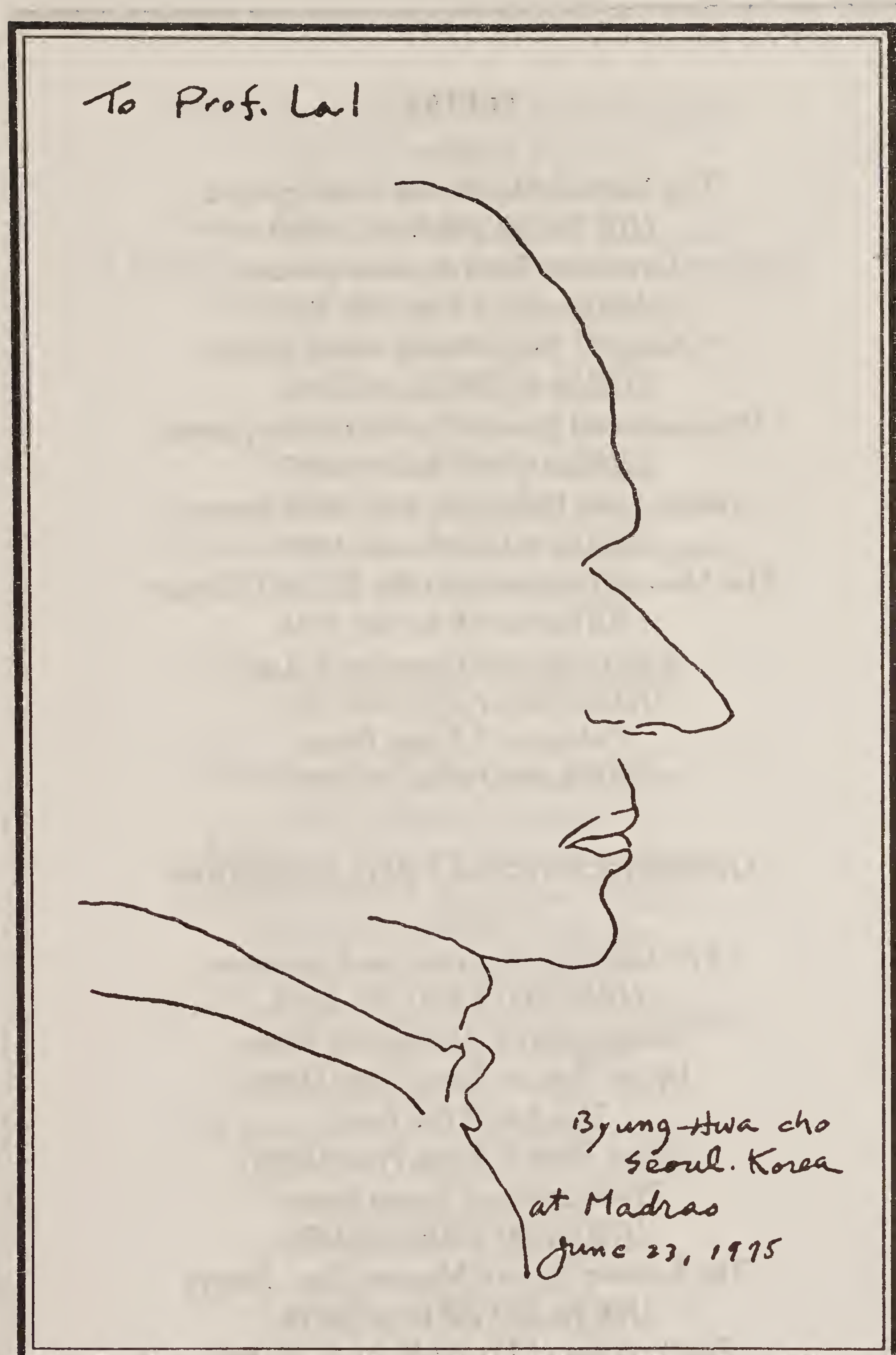
In an email communication Sri A. Hirendranath notes the following śloka missing in section 65 (page 412) of the Sabhā Parva. It is sloka 17:

17 Mādri's sons, dear to you, now belong to us.
It seems, Yudhiṣṭhira,
You love Arjuna and Bhīma more
than you love them.

Therefore, on page 413, śloka 17 should be śloka 18; on page 413, ślokas 18, 19, 20 become 19, 20, 21.

VANA PARVA

Page	Line	Read
192	8	Phālguna



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Writers Workshop ~ A Credo by P. Lal

Glory be to Mahakala. It is now 2005. I am three score and sixteen. Time for some home truths. Because WRITERS WORKSHOP has close to 3000 separate titles in its checklist (published over 47 years 1958-2005), and because it has averaged around 100 titles each year since 1995, there is a misconception that it is an Indian publishing leviathan. (No other publisher in India has that many titles on its annual list.) The truth is much less awesome. WRITERS WORKSHOP has no office; it operates from my residence, from the living-room and a multi-purpose bedroom. It has no secretary; my "secretary" is a three-tiered Godrej filing cabinet. It has no editor, no "readers" to inspect, evaluate and OK typescripts; I do all three tasks. It has no proofreader; I perform the nitty-gritty of deleting, accreting and correcting. It has no "assistant" to acknowledge or follow up letters; I do all that too. It has no typewriter; I reply in longhand. (From 2004, kowtowing to the hi-tech convenience, I sometimes seek help from my computer-savvy grand-daughter Shuktara to e-mail replies to insistent and urgent enquiries for WW information.) It has no retail or wholesale distribution "outlet"; there is only a cubby-hole of a kiosk at my residence (8 feet x 4 feet roughly) called the Book Nook, where a dedicated young assistant attends to intermittent sales of WW books. This Lake Gardens kiosk opened in 1998, 40 years after WW's inception.

How then has WW survived? Without plush foundations to back it, without advertisement, without large-hearted patrons? Initially, by the skin of our teeth (1958-1964). Then (1965-1990) by my visits to hard currency lands, specially Great Britain, the USA and Australia on lecture assignments and visiting professorships on two dozen or so occasions, and pumping the shekels thus earned to keep alive a gasping ideal.

Alternative publishing is desperately needed wherever commercial publication rules. WW is *not* a professional publishing house. It does not print well-known names; it makes names known and well known, and then leaves them in the loving clutches of the so-called "free" market (which can be and is very cut-throat and very expensive). It is not sad, it is obnoxious, to plead, as publishers do, "I will not publish poetry because it does not sell." Most English book publishing today in boom-time India and outside is book-dumping. There is a nexus between high-profile PR-conscious book publishers, semi-literate booksellers, moribund public and state libraries, poorly informed and nepotistic underlings in charge of book review pages and supplements of most national newspapers and magazines, and biased bulk purchases of near worthless books by bureaucratic institutions set up – believe it or not! – to inform, educate and elevate the reading public.

Because WW goes in for serious creative writing, and because there is no satisfactory distribution network for such writing, its terms of publication are unique. I must be the only publisher in the world who knows when and where every book is sold; I have the name and address of every buyer of a WW book. Upon my acceptance of a typescript, an agreement form is sent to the writer. *All* copyright remains with the writer. Poetry appears in 350 copies; prose in 500. Ten per cent (35 copies of the poetry book, 50 of the prose) is given in lieu of royalty. The writer is also expected to make an advance purchase of 100 copies of his or her book, for sale or distribution as he or she pleases. Printing is done in Calcutta hand-operated presses, situated in the residences of their owners. The whole process is a cottage industry style low-key entrepreneurship, in the belief that small is not only beautiful but viable as well. Vanity and sponsored publishing? Yes, I am humanly vain about it and I do sponsor what I think is good writing. If any lover of literature will offer to subsidise, with no strings attached, striking new work by talented Indian poets, fiction-writers and belles-lettrists, please get in touch with me. The gesture will be acknowledged, appreciated, accepted, and implemented. Such Good Samaritan generosities, not market forces, are at the root of civilised and significant publishing the world over.

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